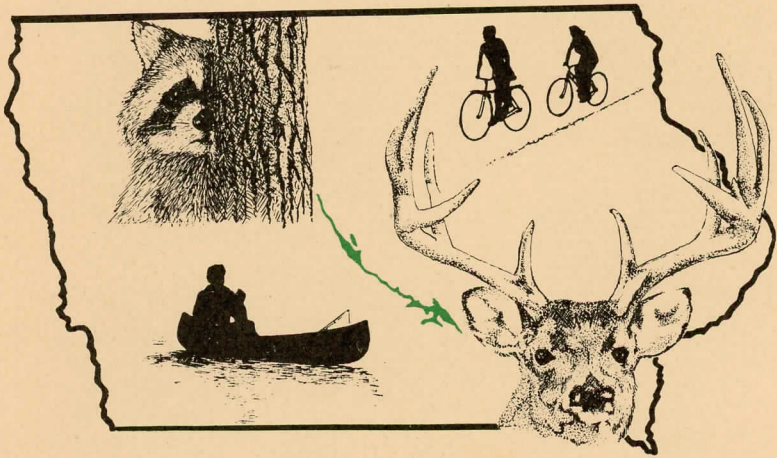


Saga of the Des Moines River Greenbelt



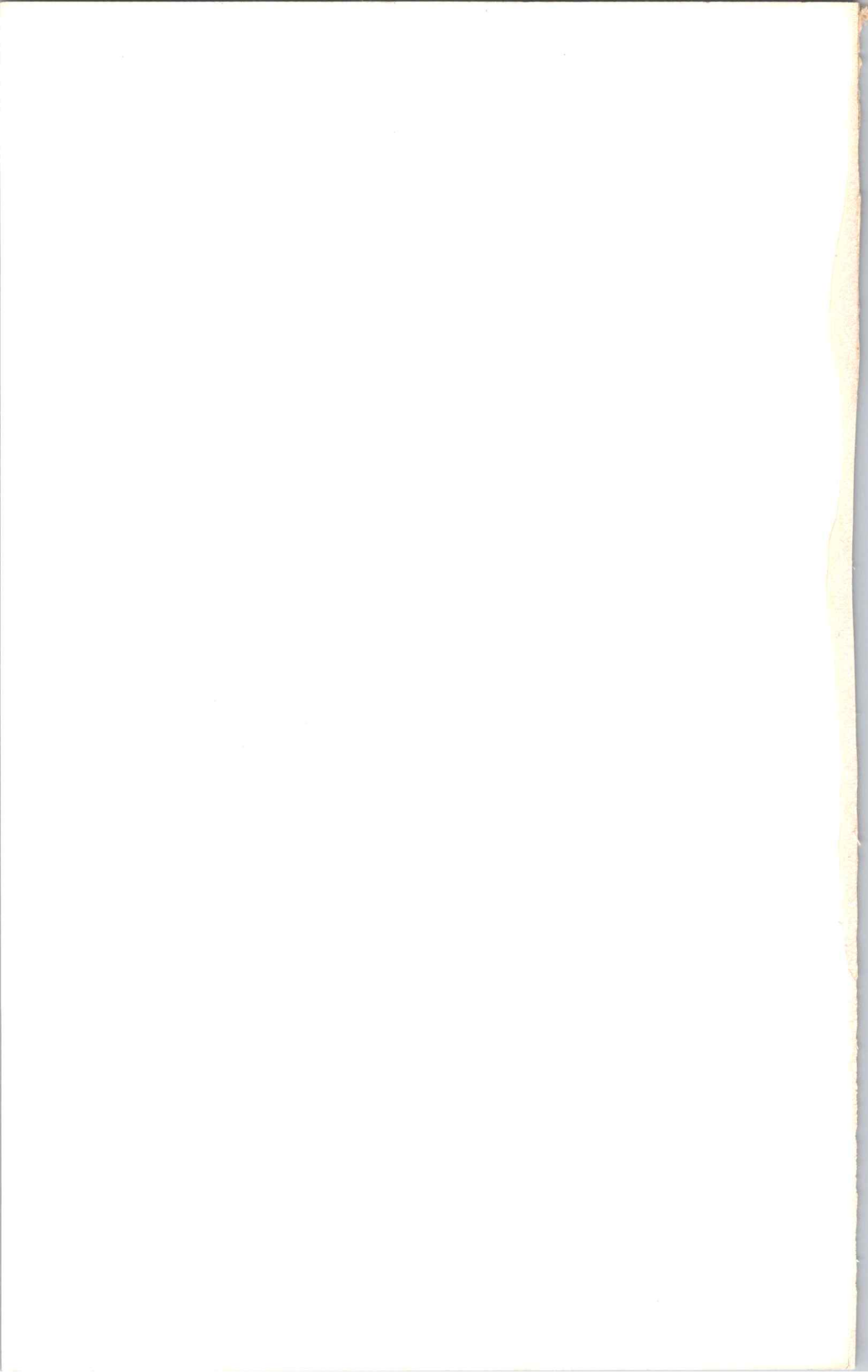
by
Harriet Heusinkveld

Saga of the Des Moines River Greenbelt

By
Harriet Heusinkveld
Central College, Pella, Iowa

*To Vera. former student
and good friend
Harriet Heusinkveld*

Pella Printing Company
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1989



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I wish to give my sincere thanks to Dr. Harriet Heusinkveld for her many hours of hard work and diligence in preparing the manuscript for the SAGA OF THE DES MOINES RIVER GREENBELT. Her in-depth research and thoughtful analysis of events past provide the reader with a window through time back to the days of the prairie settlers, hillside coal miners, steam boats and life on the Des Moines River. On behalf of the Des Moines Recreational River and Greenbelt Advisory Committee, and all of those persons who assisted in the preparation and review of the book, I offer a debt of gratitude.

Larry J. Wilson
Director, Iowa Department of
Natural Resources

Chairman, Des Moines
Recreational River and Greenbelt
Advisory Committee

FOREWORD

The Des Moines, the "Old Man River" of Central Iowa, keeps rolling along and is indeed old as compared to human occupation of the land. In its long life it has rerouted its channel from one bluff to the other. It has straightened its course by cutting through meanders. It has been dumped full of glacial debris and has had to fight its way out again. It has been continually changing.

When white settlers came into the land, they became a major factor in changing the river as they deforested its banks, planted crops right up to the river's edge, and straightened it. In recent years, the U.S. Government made two great dams, Red Rock and Saylorville. In part, these two projects were attempts to correct mistakes man had previously made with respect to the river.

The latest project, the Greenbelt, is intended to conserve the river and its banks, as well as to make it once again a place of beauty, a place where one can find refreshment and recreation.

The history of the occupants and their relationship to the mighty Des Moines River and the adjoining lands through the years is the theme of this book. A knowledge of its history serves to enhance one's enjoyment of the area, as does beholding the beauty of its waterways and forests and prairies.

Researching the history of the Greenbelt has been an absorbing experience. Many Iowans, no matter where they live, know much more about the eastern part of our State than they do of the Des Moines River belt and perhaps believe that there is nothing of interest here. They are mistaken. The wealth of interesting, exciting lore right under our feet, as well as the record of courage and creativity and plain hard toil of those who passed this way before, form an inspiring story. It is awesome and humbling to realize the extent to which we are the rich inheritors from those who ploughed the prairies and drained the wetlands, established the towns and the railroads and highways, and founded the schools and churches. It is important that their history be recorded and preserved.

Every group of people who lived along the Des Moines River figures in this history. Prehistoric people came first, and their tenure was the longest, thousand of years, in fact. Through such a long span of time, tremendous changes in climate, in flora and

fauna, and even geological features occurred. Their way of making a living changed through time in accordance with these physical changes.

When white settlers appeared on the scene, they recorded the ways of the Indians of the area, who were therefore no longer referred to as prehistoric people. The Ioways, the Sac and Fox, and the Sioux were the Indians the settlers encountered, each people making a living out of the environment in their own way. Indian ways of life were incompatible with the white settlers' ideas as to how the land should be used, and in a very short time, the whites displaced the Indians.

The history of the white people in the Des Moines River area is divided into three major periods, as related to three great changes in technology—(1) the horse and wagon (supplemented by river boats), (2) the railroad, and (3) the automobile. The inhabitants used the resources of the land and river somewhat differently in each of these periods, depending on the transportation they had available at the time. Significant social changes and changes in ways of living accompanied each change in technology.

The town is an important settlement unit and a convenient one for scrutiny. Of the many towns analyzed, a few are picked out for particular scrutiny—Red Rock, the oldest of the river towns and one associated with important historical events; Fraser which is the embodiment of railroad, coal, and river lore; and Stratford, which has done a fairly successful job of fighting the Midwest phenomenon of small town decline. The impact of larger cities, Des Moines in particular, is discussed during various different periods of the area's history.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Advisory Committee of the Des Moines Recreational River and Greenbelt under whose auspices I wrote this book and whose members gave me many helpful suggestions.

I am grateful to the many warm, friendly people who have furnished information, guided me about their towns, invited me into their homes, lent me their prized centennial histories, and made photos and other sources of information available to me.

I especially wish to thank Dorothy Bean, Marjorie Blair, Iva Miedema Greta Mount, and Mildred Steele, Pella; Alice Walker, Swan; Marvin and Mary Jo Johnston, Geraldine Conklin, and

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H. H.

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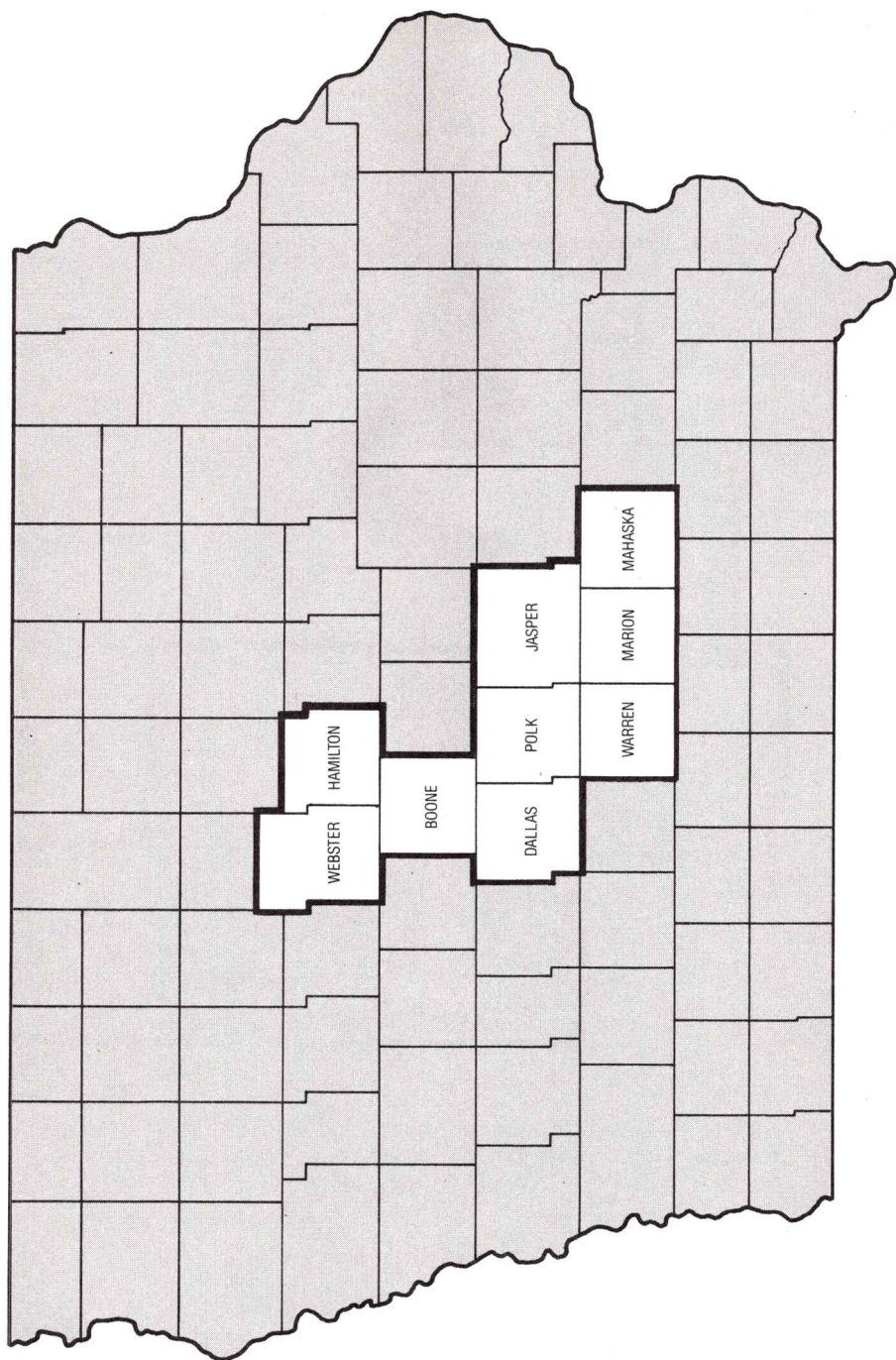


Figure 0—The Des Moines Recreational River and Greenbelt.

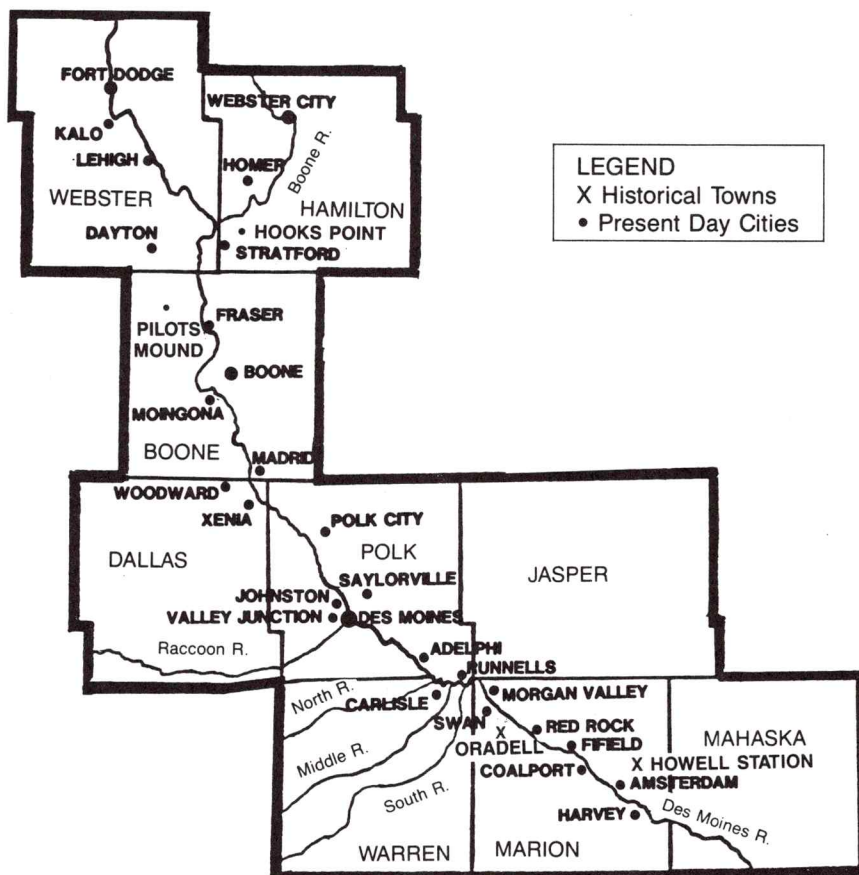


Figure 1—Greenbelt Counties and Towns, Past and Present.
 (The River before Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake
 were constructed).

Definition and Scope of the Des Moines Recreational River and Greenbelt Area

The Greenbelt (as it will henceforth be called) Project was authorized by Public Law 99-88 (August 8, 1985) and subsequent legislation. It is designed to develop, operate, and maintain a recreational and Greenbelt area along the Des Moines River, between the point where the Des Moines intersects with U.S. Highway 20 at Fort Dodge, downstream to the point where the river intersects with U.S. Highway 92, about 6 miles below the Red Rock Dam in Marion County. Subsequently, the project was expanded to include a strip along the Boone River from Webster City downstream to its confluence with the Des Moines River (Boone Forks).

The Greenbelt corridor consists of beautiful natural areas as well as a variety of man-made recreational areas such as Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake. The Greenbelt goal is to coordinate existing and future Federal, State, and local projects in order to maximize their attraction both for recreational use and for economic development.

The Greenbelt Project as planned by the Rock Island District Corps of Engineers in consultation with State, County, and local groups, includes streambank stabilization, tree plantings, bicycle and hiking trails, boat ramps, construction and maintenance of facilities in park areas, a marked Scenic Road route, the conservation or reconstruction of historic sites, as well as other projects yet being considered.

In short, the Greenbelt project aims to preserve the natural treasures of the Des Moines River belt and to enhance its recreational attractiveness.

Chapter 1

The Des Moines River

'The Des Moines is a river of superlatives. It is the longest river in Iowa. It has the widest basin and drains the largest watershed in Iowa. It has more tributaries and larger ones than any other stream. . . It is the only river which completely crosses the state. It has the worst floods, does more damage to crops and homes, and carries more silt than any other river in Iowa.

More grain and livestock are produced in the Des Moines River Valley than in any other Iowa river valley. The same is true of coal, gypsum, and clay produced.'" (Petersen: 1941, 77).

The Des Moines River rises in the glacial moraines of southern Minnesota, flows through Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Ottumwa, and empties into the Mississippi River at Keokuk, a total distance of 535 miles.

The Des Moines River was the magnet in central Iowa that drew early settlers to seek their homes along its banks. The river banks provided wild fruit—cherries, crab apples, and plums—and fish and game.

The settlers found that they could much more easily work the soft alluvial soils of the bottomlands than the tangled sod of the prairies. They, like the Indians before them, planted their corn here. They also found much-needed timber as well as drinking water for their families and for the livestock. Water for washing their clothing and for bathing came from the river.

The river was the settlers' chief highway. They carried their surplus butter, eggs, and meat to market in small keel boats; they transported their tobacco and coffee and cloth and matches back home in these same boats.

From 1850-1865, large steamboats traveled the river up to Fort Des Moines and at times even as far as Fort Dodge. However, steamboating depended on a high level of water and thus was seasonal. In 1865, Congress declared the river unnavigable though smaller boats continued to carry grains and supplies for a time.

Almost all the early towns, related as they were to river transport, were established along the river. Des Moines at the confluence of the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers, and Fort

Dodge at the confluence of Lizard Creek and the Des Moines River became the largest cities. Many, many small market towns were founded along the river like beads on a string, often only two or three miles apart.

Grist mills and saw mills were built along the river to take advantage of the power generated by falling water. The numerous little mills were a wonderful boon to the early settler who previously had to endure the hardships of traveling to and from the mill at Bonaparte.

The river cut through the underlying Pennsylvanian rocks to expose great veins of coal. From a small start of digging coal from the banks by hand for fuel for the steamboats or for home use, coal became commercially important in towns all up and down the river and was responsible for an affluent era in Iowa's economy.

Before refrigerators were developed, the river was a source of ice. Huge blocks of ice were cut out of the river in winter and stored in sawdust in large sheds, ready for household distribution during the summer months.

The river was also a troublesome barrier. Crossing the river was a major undertaking and dangerous, too. Those low places where it was possible to ford the river became important settlements, as for example, Ford, a once busy little village across from Runnells. People favored the tributaries as places to live because they were easy to cross and to bridge. The Des Moines River itself was not bridged for many years.

Ferries were established in a number of places along the river. They transported families and horses and wagons across the river for a fee, which was determined by law. Durham's Ferry, in Marion County, and the ferry at Des Moines were especially busy, transporting hundreds of settlers bound for points westward.

The river had its fearful side, too. An excerpt from an unpublished family history (Leuty of Red Rock) describes the hazards of crossing the river:

They (Mrs. Leuty's parents) settled on the north bank of the Des Moines River. When the high waters of 1851 came, with three children in a boat, and a cow tied on behind, they crossed the river at Red Rock to the south side. In crossing, the cow broke loose and started to swim back to the shore, and that was the

last we ever saw of her. It would be difficult for the people of today to realize what such a loss meant to this young pioneer family. (Walker: 1972, 120).

In times of high water, the Des Moines could indeed be a demon. It swept away whole towns (Dudley) and mills (Elk Rapids) and an electric power plant (Fraser) and bridges (Red Rock) to name but a few. It straightened its course by cutting through meanders and left towns whose existence had depended on the river some distance back from the water.

Until the river was harnessed in 1969 with the building of the Red Rock dam, many farms and towns suffered periodic heavy losses those years when the river flooded its banks (see Figure 2).

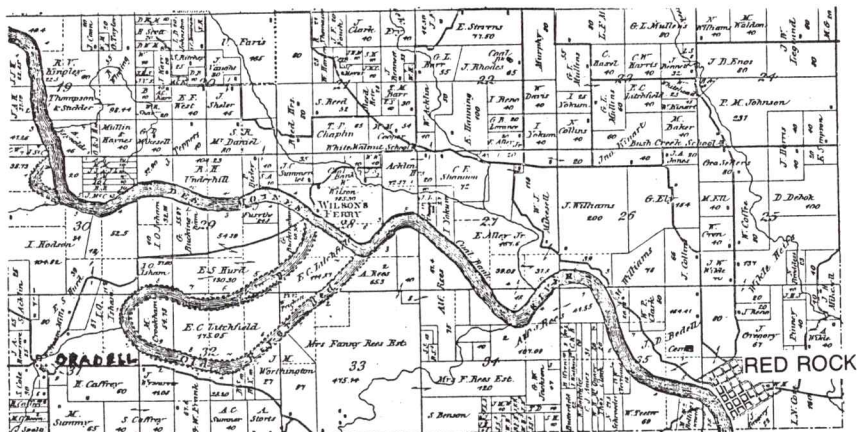
The river's original functions are today much diminished. It is now a source of city water, a sewage disposal site, a probable electric power generation site (Red Rock), and a vacationland.

The Boone River

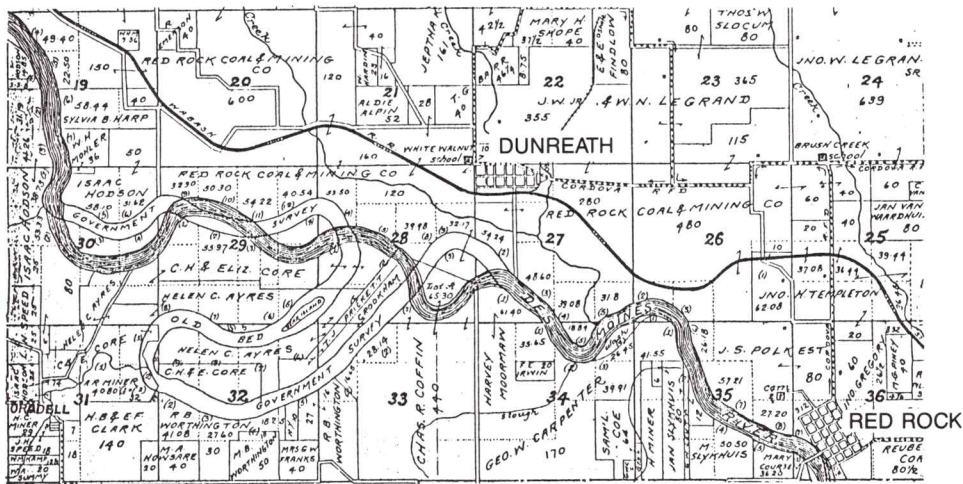
The Boone River is a lovely, swift-flowing, 91-mile long river which rises in Hancock County, continues into Hamilton County (where it becomes a part of the Greenbelt) through Webster City and southeast until just over the border into Webster County, it joins the Des Moines River (this point is called Boone Forks).

In Hamilton County, the river falls an average of 3.73 feet per mile but in some places as much as 8 feet per mile. The rapids furnished the water power for many famous early mills, among them Tunnel Mill and Bells Mill.

Presently, the Boone is known for its wild scenery, some of the most beautiful in the Greenbelt, and it is said to be the best canoeing river in Iowa.



1875



1909

Figure 2—River Channel Changes, 1875-1909 (Marion County).
The bottomlands were often mudflats. Little river towns disappeared when the river changed its course.
(Marion County Atlases, 1875 and 1909)

Chapter 2

Geological Development of Greenbelt Land and Streams

Though its inhabitants have dramatically altered the appearance of the Des Moines River Valley during their brief occupancy, much more awesome changes occurred during the millennia before their appearance. Two major agents in the formation of this land were: (1) the continental seas, which determined the types of underlying rock, and (2) the glaciers of the Ice Age, which shaped the topography, formed the drainage patterns, and laid down soil materials.

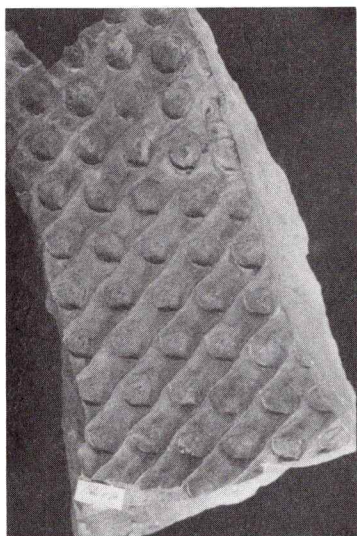
The Pennsylvanian Seas

Each of the various ancient seas that covered the land left layers of sediments and sedimentary rocks, but only the last one in any given area is significant. An extremely ancient sea, the Pennsylvanian, was the last to cover the Greenbelt (except for a small portion of northern Webster County, where the last sea was the Jurassic, a more recent sea).

A unique characteristic of the Pennsylvanian Period (310-265 million years ago) was that the equator at that time was a little north of Iowa, and the climate of central Iowa was tropical! Giant scaly-barked fern trees grew in the coastal swamps of the very shallow Pennsylvanian Sea. As they stood in the stagnant warm waters, the trees turned to coal. Most of Iowa's coal, in fact, is found in the Greenbelt area; coal was once second only to good soil in resource value. The history of many an Iowa town revolved around coal. Towns lived and died in response to coal supply and demand.

Limestone, in part derived from the hard shells of ancient marine life, is economically important in the area (see Figure 3). Sandstone outcrops, deposited as the deltas of great rivers which once emptied into the Pennsylvanian Sea, occur in such places as the Elk Rock and Red Rock bluffs of Marion County, in the Ledges of Boone County, and in Dolliver State Park in Webster County. Shale deposits are also present.

Except for the Fort Dodge gypsum of the Jurassic Period, the bedrock of the Greenbelt is remarkably uniform as to type.



Fossilized imprints of tropical trees of Pennsylvanian Coal Bearing Period. Found in an abandoned coal mine in 1961 on the Des Moines River near Pella (Dr. Donald Huffman)

The Ice Age or Pleistocene

The Ice Age, the time of the passage of a succession of glaciers, occurred relatively recently, geologically speaking, from about 2 million to 10,000 years ago. The glaciers carried rock materials from northern lands and deposited them in Iowa (see Figure 4). These deposits, called till or drift, filled in the uneven places, including the river channels, thus leveling the land but disarranging the drainage patterns. Fine materials were laid down and provided excellent soil minerals. Bigger rocks were laid down, too, often where the glacier paused for a time. These piles of coarse materials were called moraines, an example of which may be seen in the line of low hills across Boone County.

In some places, huge chunks of ice remained after the main body of the glacier had passed on. These, when melted, formed the sloughs and lakes so common in the northern counties of the Greenbelt.

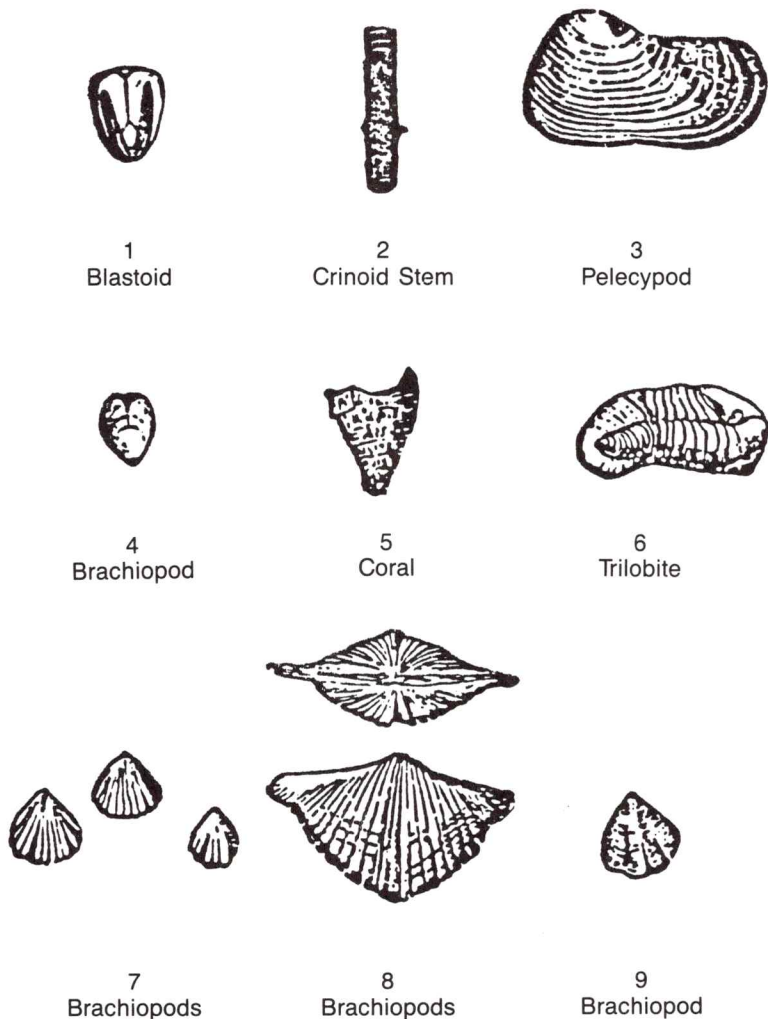


Figure 3—Fossils of the Ancient Seas (the Pella Fauna)
(Fossils and Rocks of Eastern, Iowa. Iowa Geological Survey, 1967).

After a glacier melted, forces of water and wind attacked the land, and the process of erosion began. The Greenbelt is divided into two topographic-drainage regions as determined by the amount of time each region was out from under the glacier and thus subject to erosion:

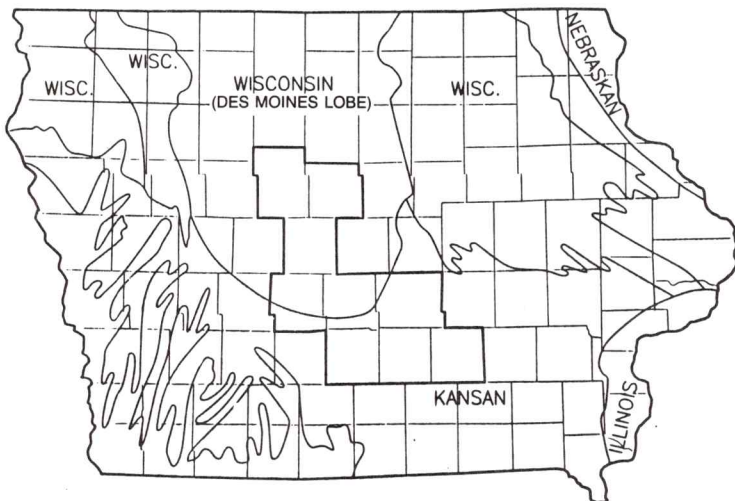


Figure 4—Glaciation in Iowa.
(Iowa Geological Survey)

(1) **South of the City of Des Moines**, the last glacier to pass over this southern area was the Kansan, a very ancient glacier. Hundreds of thousands of years have elapsed since the passage of the Kansan glacier, and streams have therefore had a long time to tear down the land and sculpture it into rolling hills interspersed with areas of level upland divides.

The river presently has little work to do so it flows along sluggishly, and instead of carrying erosive sediments, it drops them into its bed. As the river lays down the silt and sand, it takes the course of least resistance and flows around these deposits rather than through them thus cutting great meanders.

The river cuts laterally rather than downward, creating a wide area of flat bottomlands, very rich in alluvial soils, but until the completion of the Red Rock Dam in 1969, subject to devastating floods.

The uplands back from the river bottoms are eroded and leached, and their thin soils, as well as uneven topography, are often poor for cropping and are instead used for grazing. Land values are among the lowest in the State (see Figure 8). This area south of Des Moines is part of the region known today as the Southern Iowa Pasture Area (see Figure 5).



Figure 5—Agricultural Areas in Iowa.
(Professor H.H. McCarty, University of Iowa)

(2) **North of the City of Des Moines**, the last glacier was the Wisconsin (Des Moines Lobe), the latest of the glaciers to invade Iowa. The topography and drainage of the area covered by the Wisconsin glacier is therefore very young. The streams were filled with glacial deposits, and drainage patterns were completely disarranged; they have not yet had the time to completely reestablish themselves. The land is flat and dotted with sloughs and lakes, although man has in this present century drained many of these recently glaciated lands.

The river is working hard to drain the land, cutting downward rather than laterally, resulting in steep banks, many of them heavily forested, and only narrow belts of bottomland. Its course is relatively straight with but few meanders.

The land back from the river valley is flat and very fertile, both as a result of the rich minerals deposited on it by the glacier (glacial till), as well as the rich humus it has derived from the tall grass of the prairies (see Figure 6). The area, which includes North Polk, Boone, Hamilton, and Webster Counties, has the most fertile, most valuable soils in Iowa (see Figures 4 and 8 for correlation of Wisconsin glacier deposits and high land values). The combination of fertile soils and flat topography makes it possible to cultivate almost every inch of land. It is today referred to as the Cash Grain Area of Iowa (see Figure 5).

In summary, the Greenbelt owes (1) its mineral resources—coal, clay, sandstone, limestone, and gypsum—to its various ancient seas, principally the Pennsylvanian and (2) its soils, topography, and drainage to the glaciers and the time they disappeared from the land.

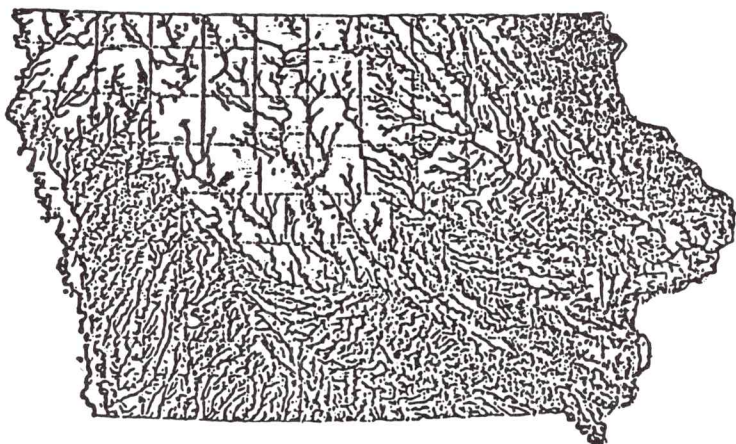


Figure 6—Native Vegetation in Iowa.

Note: Unshaded areas are prairies; dark areas are forests.

(Iowa Geological Survey)

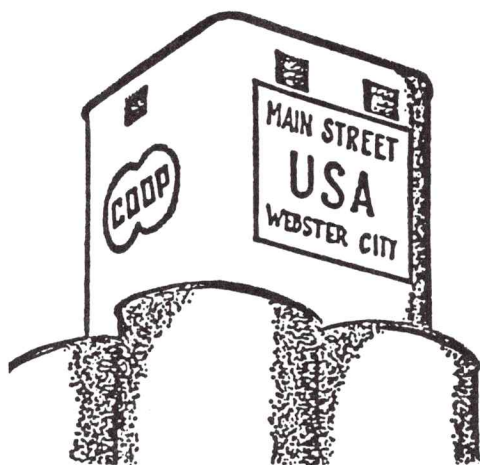


Figure 7—Grain Elevator, Symbol of the Cash Grain Area.

(Hamilton County Historical Society)

Chapter 3

Prehistoric Peoples in Iowa

c. 10,000 B.C.-1,500 A.D.

"History is the today of another age...of people living lives on another level of eternity's spiral."

—Lewis C. Debo

Twelve thousand years ago, small groups of semi-nomadic hunters were passing through Iowa in search of big game. We know of them only through archeological finds of bones and stone projectile points. From these rather meager artifacts, scholars have been able to reconstruct the history of the earliest Iowans. (The Lake Red Rock Visitors' Center has an excellent display of the artifacts of the various prehistoric periods).

Four major time periods of that 10,000 or more years of the prehistoric age in Iowa, each related to changing environmental factors, and thus of available resources for sustaining life, are as follows:

(1) **Period of the Paleo-Indians**, 12,000 to 8,000 years ago. The climate was cold. The Wisconsin glacier, which had covered the land as far south as the present site of Des Moines, was melting and retreating. Coniferous trees—spruce, larch, and fir—grew where the glacier had been. Huge ponderous animals with thick layers of fat and fur to withstand the glacial-like climate—the mastodon and the mammoth and the giant bison—roamed the land. The mastodons browsed the forests for food, and the mammoths and bison fed on the post-glacial tundra vegetation. The first human beings appeared on the scene, and they hunted the large animals, as is deduced from the projectile points which have been found.

(2) **The Archaic Period**, 8,500 to 2,500 years ago, was drier and warmer than the preceding period. Deciduous trees—oaks and elms—replaced the conifers. As the climate continued to get warmer, prairie grasses of many types took over in certain spots and formed a parklike landscape. The mammoth, mastodon, and giant bison became extinct. Big-horn bison grazed on the prairie grass, migrating south in search of food in the winter. The Indians followed, hunting this smaller bison which supplied practically all their needs. Stone spear points,

grooved axes, and hide scrapers record their way of life. They used the skin for clothing and shelters and blankets and for food containers; the bones for tools, though the majority of their tools were made of stone; and the meat, of course, for food. They gathered wild plants to supplement their diet.

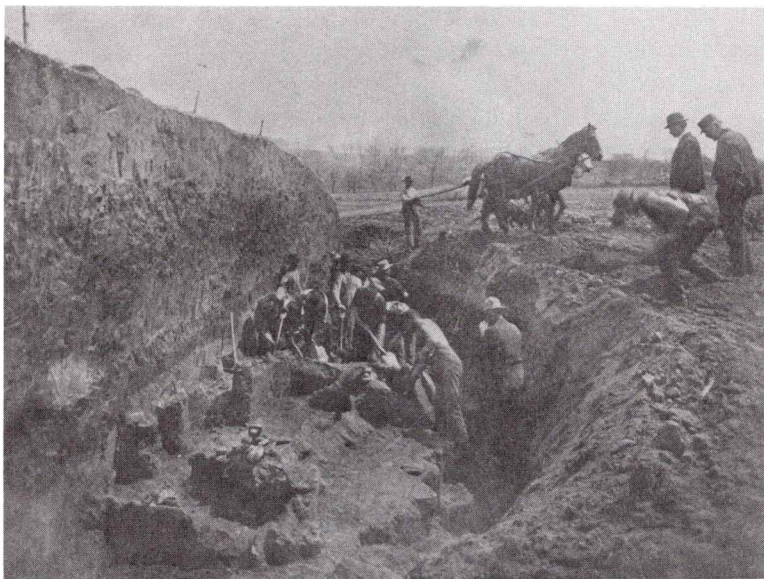
(3) **The Woodland Period**, 2,500 to 1,000 years ago, marked a slightly cooler climate and an increase in oak trees, which took over some of the land previously in prairie. It was a period of transition from a nomadic hunting and gathering economy to a semi-permanent occupancy. Hunting of bison, deer, and elk, fishing, and gathering of nuts provided a food supply. Three Greenbelt areas where archeological finds indicate this semi-permanent living pattern are: (1) the Big Creek area in Polk County, (2) the Scandia Bottoms in Dallas County, and (3) the Boone bottoms in Hamilton County. Artifact finds indicate a somewhat larger population than that of earlier times.

Man was for the first time making pottery, as indicated by finds of pottery sherds. Pottery, because of its bulk as well as its fragility, is not practical in a completely nomadic existence. The Woodland people went on hunting and gathering expeditions and returned to their food reserves, which they had placed in clay pots and stored in pits under the floors of their mud and stick dwellings. They made pots from a mixture of clay and sand and decorated them by pressing a plant fiber or cord into the clay pot while it was still wet.

Burial mounds also give evidence of some degree of settled life. At least 30 burial mounds have been found in the Lake Red Rock area, typically located at the crest of a bluff overlooking the Des Moines River or one of its tributaries. This type of location may have been chosen for the purpose of establishing a position of observation or as a pronouncement of territorial control.

Seventeen mounds have been found in the Saylorville Lake area, the largest of which is referred to as the Boone Mound, 130 feet by 160 feet and 15 feet high. The Boone Mound was excavated in 1908 in crude fashion (compared to present-day methods), but there appear to be no official records of the artifacts found. It is believed that it was a crypt and that cremations were performed at this place, and that it was the center of a comparatively large population, who used it for burial rituals (Benn: 1985, 41). The Sioux Indians who occupied this

area in historic times told the white man that they had no knowledge of these mounds, and that they were already there when their people first came into the country (Andreas: 1875, 369).



Excavation of Boone Mound in 1909. (Larry Adams)

It appears that the Woodland Indians carried on trade with other peoples in that some of the spear points which have been found are made of stones not present in the Des Moines River Valley.

(4) **The Oneota**, last of the four prehistoric periods, occurred 1,000 to 400 years ago (about 950 A.D. to 1550 A.D.). It is theorized that the Oneotas, in fact, persisted into historic times and were known to the incoming Europeans as the Ioways.

Archeological remains of this culture include pottery made from shells as well as from red sandstone. The pots are decorated in geometric designs. Stone scrapers, which they used for tools, have also been unearthed. Camp sites including small villages and storage pits have been discovered in the area near State Highway 14 bridge near Red Rock, and continuing along the bottomlands to Des Moines.

Hunting of bison and small game was important, but plant-

ing corn, beans and pumpkins constituted an ever increasing element of the Oneota economy. Methods of agriculture were becoming more sophisticated in terms of choice of better seeds as well as the use of more effective tools, such as bones and antler horns for preparing the soil and hoeing the crops.

Prehistoric people in their confrontation with the environment had to be resourceful and clever, for example, in killing the huge mastodons and mammoths (Paleo-Indian Period) with the crude tools at their disposal, and in using Nature to provide them not only with food but also with medicines, clay for pots, tools, and materials for shelters and clothing.

Chapter 4

Indian Lands Usurped by the Whites

1500-1845

After Columbus' discovery of America in 1492, it became known in Europe that across the ocean was a vast "wilderness" inhabited by people of another color, a people who had different beliefs and customs. Exploiting this new land was an exciting prospect. The natives, of course, had not the faintest notion of the effect these European ambitions would have on their lives. They would soon meet the vanguard of the whites—the trappers, the fur traders, the soldiers—and finally, the settlers.

The Ioways

During the 17th century, the Ioways, prehistorically known as the Oneotas, controlled much of southern Iowa including the Des Moines River Valley. They hunted, fished, planted a few crops, and from 1763-1830 carried on a profitable trade in furs with the English, though Spain claimed the land and protested the intrusion of the English. The Ioways, raided by the Sioux from the north and harassed by the Sac and Fox Indians coming into Iowa from the southeast, apparently left the Des Moines River Valley in the early 1800's and went to Kansas.

The Sioux

The Sioux, who lived in a broad area north of Des Moines, were little inclined to raise corn and vegetables. They depended on hunting the buffalo and smaller game and on the gathering of wild seeds.

They made temporary homes of skin, earth, or pole and thatch. Often they were on the move as they followed the migrations of the wild buffalo.

They were often cold in winter because their tepees offered insufficient protection, and hungry because their food supply was exhausted. At such times, the Siouxs raided their neighbors in search of food and stole horses from the Omahas and other tribes. The horses gave them the mobility they needed to conduct their raids. The Siouxs obtained the reputation for being a warlike people, though they had many noble and generous leaders among them.

The Sac (Sauk) and Fox

The Sac and Fox Indians, who came to be identified with the Des Moines River Valley more than any other Indian tribe, came from Wisconsin after an altercation with the French to whom they had been selling furs. The Sacs and Foxes, two separate tribes in Wisconsin, joined together to protect themselves from the French following the murder of a Frenchman. They fled from Wisconsin and occupied the Des Moines River area in Iowa, where they all but annihilated the Ioways.

The Sac and Fox had not yet seen the end of the French. In 1735, Captain Joseph de Noyelles, with a band of 80 men, left Detroit to force the Indians to return to Wisconsin to assist in the fur trade. They followed their prey up the Des Moines River, and on April 19, 1735, they fought a pitched battle with the Indians at the present site of Des Moines, the first and only battle between Indians and whites on Iowa soil. The battle ended in a draw, and de Noyelles and his army went back to their fort in Wisconsin, having accomplished nothing.



Sac Chief Keokuk, about 1780-1848 (Annals of Iowa, July, 1943)

Sac and Fox Ways of Life

The Sac and Fox were a very religious people. They worshipped the Great Spirit Manitou who created the land and then created man out of the yellow earth and breathed the breath of life into him. W.M. Donnel, an early settler in the Red Rock area, recounts many incidents concerning their ways of life. He tells how a group of white men came upon a large tent where a number of red men were seated, chanting and praying in worship of Manitou. A squaw rebuked the whites when they pushed back the tent flap because they were talking loudly and disturbing the prayers. (Donnel: 1872, 150).

A witness of the ceremony following the death of a child, by scalding, reports that the chieftain (who Donnel said was Keokuk) and some of his braves were engaged in silent prayers followed by chants. The father of the child invoked the Great Spirit to take good care of his little one, "You, God know what is best, and I know he will be happy with you." The braves then made offerings of some of their most precious possessions by throwing them into the fire. (Donnel: 1872, 204).

The white man depended on the printed Bible. The Indian could not read; his revelation came from the earth itself.

Red Rock (in Marion County) became an important meeting place for bands of Sac and Fox Indians. A huge sycamore tree, 24 feet in girth and more than 50 feet in height, near the banks of the river was a favorite rendezvous. (This impressive landmark was covered by the waters of Lake Red Rock in 1969 and has since rotted away).

The Indians camped in the red sandstone river bluffs which they called the "Painted Rocks" and in the nearby Whitebreast Creek areas. Indian trails from the Red Rock area extended in all directions.

Keokuk's Town, according to Dr. W.H.H. Barker, early settler in the area, was the only Indian village known to be located in Marion County. It was abandoned soon after the whites began to settle in the neighborhood. Of it, he wrote,

Keokuk's Town was a noted point in Indian history. It lay on the north side of the Des Moines River on a slight ridge between Prairie Lake and the river. Numerous trails led to this village from various points of the compass. One of these led upstream to the red rocks and then on to the confluence of the Des

Moines and the Coon (present city of Des Moines). Another crossed English Creek just a few feet below where the river is spanned by the Rock Island bridge within the precincts of the present town of Harvey. (Barker in Knoxville Journal, September 25, 1930).

The men of the tribe went on three-month hunting and gathering expeditions during the summer. Before going, they made sacrifices to Manitou, who gives all good gifts to man. Following a successful hunt, they celebrated by holding a feast of thanks. Such a ceremony at Red Rock village involved 50 warriors under the leadership of Chief Kish-ke-kosh. "They gathered around an altar where various offerings were burned. Each brave arose, one at a time, and spoke a few solemn religious thoughts, followed by dances of a symbolic nature." (Donnel, 1872, 218).

According to a pioneer settler, "In the early days when the broad open prairies were in their native state. . . they were a harbor for wild game. It was the custom for the Indians in the fall of the year. . . when the wind was in the right direction. . . to start fires and to burn a large tract of the country. This was done to drive the game from the grassland to the timber belts, thus giving the red man a better advantage to secure a winter supply of meat. (Barker in Knoxville Journal, September 25, 1930).

The squaws, after grubbing out hazel brush from the banks of the streams, planted and tended patches of corn. It is doubtful that the Indian men loafed very much, and certainly the Indian woman did not. She cultivated the corn, brought in the game after the men had slaughtered it, procured fuel for cooking, picked up the tents and household goods when they were preparing to move, and set them up again when they were relocated.

The Sac and Fox children were taught at home. They learned early how to use the bow and arrow and other useful arts and also the social regulations of the tribe. Story telling was often employed as a means of teaching. They also learned by observing Nature.

W.H.H. Barker writes of the Sac and Fox Indians, "He utilized the birch for his canoe, and the sugar maple he scarred with his rude tomahawk. Only these trees bore the mark of his presence. The Indian had not marred Nature in the least, save here and there a small plot of land where maize was planted

and tended by his squaw." (Knoxville Journal, Jubilee Edition, Sept. 25, 1930).

Presence of the United States Government

The Louisiana Purchase

The U.S. purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 marked the beginning of the end of the Sac and Fox way of life. It was the biggest real estate deal ever perpetrated by mankind. Americans living in the Eastern Seaboard were excited at the prospect of obtaining some of this practically free land.

But though the U.S. had purchased the land from France, actually it was the Indians who owned it by virtue of their occupation of the land through the centuries.

The U.S. took every step possible to extinguish Indian titles as rapidly as possible. By a combination of military force and persuasion of the Indians in council meetings, the U.S. drew up treaties, the significance of which were often not understood by the Indians, and then purchased the land from them.

The Neutral Ground

One of the first U.S. Government actions was to establish a belt known as the Neutral Ground (see Figure 9). The Sioux Indians were raiding the Sac and Fox as they had previously raided the Ioways.

A great battle between the two tribes was once fought in Boone County near Pilot Mound. Keokuk commanded the Sacs and Foxes, and Little Crow commanded the Sioux, with several hundred warriors engaged on either side.

Keokuk was said to have been victorious. Early settlers in the Pilot Mound area plowed up bones, and skeletons of slain warriors were exhumed from the top of one of several mounds (Union Historical Company; 1881, 255).

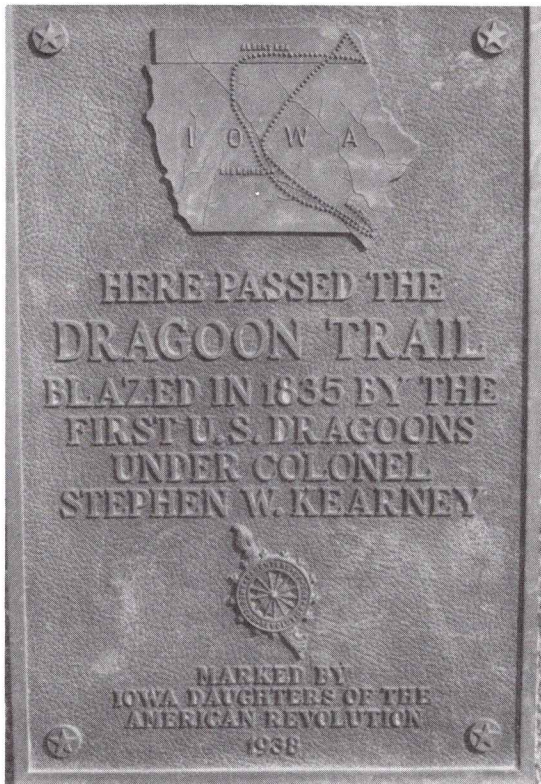
In order to separate these warring tribes, the U.S. ordered the Sioux to cede a 20-mile strip of their lands, north of a line drawn from the Upper Iowa River to the Upper Forks of the Des Moines River (just south of Fort Dodge). The Sac and Fox were to cede a 20-mile wide strip of their lands south of this line. This 40-mile strip was designated as the Neutral Ground. Both tribes were forbidden to enter the area. In fact, a number of Winnebago

Indians were settled in the strip to act as a buffer between the warring parties.

The Neutral Grounds, which included most of present-day Webster and Hamilton Counties, became a bloodier area than before; it did not accomplish its purpose. Years later, settlers were inhibited from going into Webster and Hamilton Counties for fear of the Sioux, and those who did settle were harassed by remnant Indian groups. More than once, they appealed to the soldiers at Fort Dodge for protection.

The U.S. Dragoons

In 1835, the U.S. sent an expedition of 150 cavalrymen with Indian scouts and guides, under the command of Col. Stephen A. Kearney, from Keokuk up to Raccoon Forks (Des Moines) and then to Fort Dodge and northward (see Figure 9). Second in com-



Dragoon Trail Marker, Highway #14, north of Knoxville. (George Gitter)

mand was Captain Nathan Boone, son of Daniel Boone. His memory is perpetuated in such place names as Boone, Boone County, and Boone River. They were to scout the land, ascertain the location and number of Indians, prevent intertribal wars, and keep white settlers out of the land. They were known as the Dragoons and their route as the Dragoon Trail.

New Purchase, 1842

The treaty that pertained to the acquisition of the Des Moines River area was known as the Sac and Fox Cession of 1842, or as the New Purchase of 1842. By its terms, the Sac and Fox in an assembly of the entire tribe under Keokuk, their spokesman, ceded all of their remaining lands west of the Mississippi (12 million acres) to the U.S. Government for a sum of \$800,000. The Indians agreed to surrender their lands east of the Red Rock Line (north-south line drawn through the red sandstone outcroppings in Marion County) by May 1, 1843, and west of the Red Rock Line by October 11, 1845 (see Figure 9).

Immediately after ratification of the treaty, fur traders moved to the Red Rock Line, among them the American Fur Trading

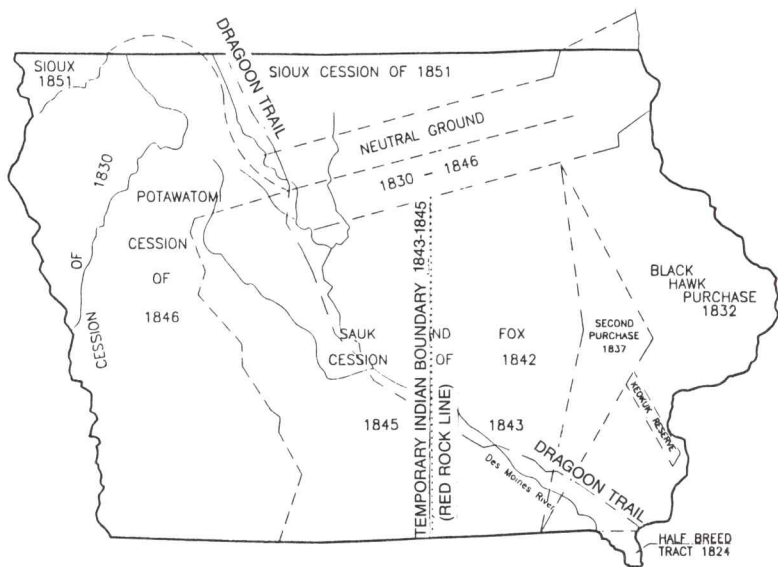


Figure 9 — Indian Land Cessions in Iowa Territory.
 (Showing also the Red Rock Line and the Dragoon Trail)
 (Adapted, Wall, Iowa, a Bicentennial History)

Company, which moved from the Indian Agency near Ottumwa. The Indians, now west of the Red Rock Line, exchanged furs and skins and maple sugar for blankets, guns, and whiskey. Red Rock became a rough place, where because of the white man's sharp practices and availability of liquor to both races, drunken brawls, stabbings, and thievery took place.

Military Forts and the Evacuation of the Indians

The first fort to be established was Fort Des Moines at Racoon Forks, the location recommended by Col. Kearney of the Dragoons. The mission of the forts was to guarantee the Indians sole right to their lands until such time as they had agreed to vacate them, and then to facilitate Indian removal from Iowa. Fort Des Moines was a busy focus of activity. Whites sought permission to enter before the legal time to establish trading posts, or offered to perform services for the fort. Some tried to sneak in early.

Destitute Sac and Fox Indians whose hunting grounds had been impoverished by white trappers were begging for food and seeking Army protection from both the whites and the Sioux Indians. Chief Keokuk located his dispirited tribe on the west side of the river, and he and his men watched the soldiers who would remove them from their beautiful Iowa in May, 1845, which would mark the saddest day in their history. The trading posts at Fort Des Moines were scenes of a great deal of violence, the fault often lying with certain unscrupulous whites, among them Henry Lott, of whom more will be said later.

In May 1845, Keokuk led his people west into the State of Kansas. He became a confirmed inebriate and died three years later.

Dr. W.H.H. Barker, an early Marion County pioneer, described the departure of a group of Indians from Red Rock:

The Red Man's farewell occurred in May, 1845. At that time, the entire body of Indians were assembled at Red Rock, preparatory to vacating their ancient domains. This was done in a dual manner. The braves rode their war steeds across to a point known as Council Bluffs. All the rest—the aged warriors, squaws, papooses—took passage in canoes, some 300 or more in number and going down the Des Moines River to its mouth, they were transferred to the same point. (Council Bluffs).

It was a pathetic site but colorful. The Indians gave their war whoops, chanted their war songs, ran boat races, and splashed in the water like aquatic birds.

No proper tribute can ever be paid that vanished people. They were ever the friends of the whites and yielded to them without parley and for a mere pitance, all their holdings. Never did they show revenge or shed a drop of innocent blood. (Knoxville Journal, September 25, 1930).

At midnight, October 10, 1845, soldiers fired guns to announce the opening of the land west of the Red Rock Line. Settlers were already lined up in their wagons or on horseback, and they rushed in and by daylight had staked out claims to thousands of acres. They were the new owners of the land.

Having accomplished its mission, Fort Des Moines was abandoned in 1846.

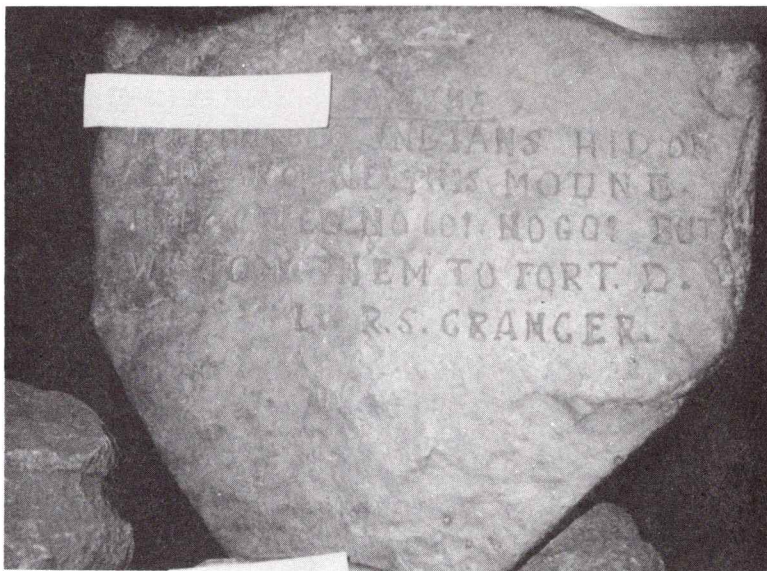
Not every Sac and Fox Indian left Iowa, however. A few hid in forests at the time of evacuation and were seen by the first settlers from time to time. They were usually destitute and begging or stealing. As reported in a pioneer's journal:

During the first years of white settlement, parties of Indians were frequently seen passing along their frequented route up and down the Des Moines River Valley, visiting the trading houses and returning to their villages. Hunting and fishing were the principal occupations. Their villages were merely camps consisting of huts and tents. . . the people could easily gather up their houses and load them, with all their baggage on ponies and move to a more plentiful locality. (Knoxville Journal, September 25, 1930).

Others escaped removal by going up the Des Moines River. They encamped near present-day Madrid in Boone County, where they hunted and fished for a living. A company of Dragoons was sent to capture them and escort them out of Iowa to Kansas. Later, a stone tablet was found near the mounds where the Indians had camped, on which these words were scratched:

December 10, 1845. Found 200 Indians Hid On and Around this Mound. They Cried, "No Go! No Go!", But we took them to Fort Dodge.

—Lt. R.S. Granger



16" by 16" stone found near abandoned stone quarry in Boone County (Heusinkveld)

The above stone is on display in the Historical Museum, Madrid, Iowa.

The Fox Indians who moved to Kansas found it a desert as compared to their beloved Iowa. In 1850, a number of them returned to Iowa and were allowed to purchase 80 acres of land (later expanded to 3,600 acres) along the Iowa River, where they are known as the Mesquakies. They still longed for their old haunts along the Des Moines River. Pella pioneer, Herman Rietveld, wrote in his journal, "Each fall, a group of Indians from Tama came here to camp and stayed until cold weather came. I think there were 30 or 40 of them. The men trapped for furs, the women gathered nuts for food and tramped around begging anything they could get." (*Pella Chronicle*, May 2, 1940).

Fort Dodge and the Sioux Indians

The Government ordered the establishment of Fort Dodge (originally called Fort Clark) in 1850 in response to pleas from settlers at Boone Forks who were being harassed by the Sioux. The Sioux were becoming more and more resentful as they saw the whites take their lands and kill their game.

Some good relationships developed as well. For example, Wakonsa, son of a Sioux chieftain, spent many hours with James Williams, son of Major William Williams of the Fort. These two were close friends and went elk hunting together and often visited in each other's homes.

The Government purchased all the Sioux lands in Iowa in 1852, proceeded to remove the Sioux, and then abandoned the Fort in 1853. Perhaps the Fort had been abandoned too soon, as a number of Sioux had escaped the soldiers' detection and remained in the land and continued to harass the settlers.

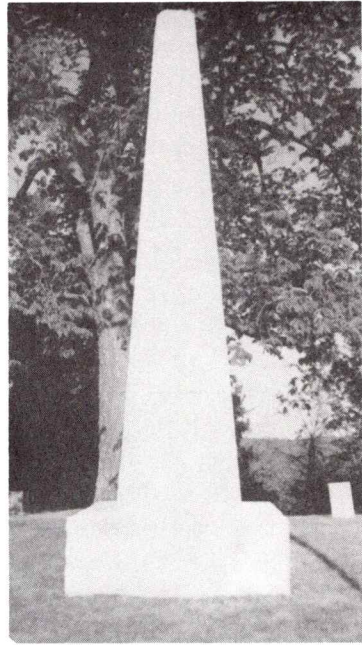
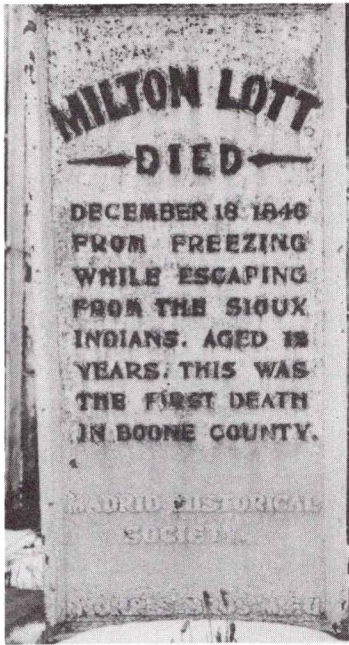
The Henry Lott Incident

An almost legendary incident, one which exacerbated the fear and hostility between the races, concerned Henry Lott, who had come from Pennsylvania, operated a trading post at Red Rock for a time, then moved to Fort Des Moines to open a trading post. He also stole horses from the Indians and sold them elsewhere. Soldiers from the Fort attempted to seize him and bring him to trial, but he escaped to Boone Forks (Webster County), where he engaged in the same business.

The Sioux soon discovered the loss of several horses and traced them to Lott's quarters. A group of Sioux descended upon the Lott cabin, finding only Mrs. Lott and her 12-year old son Milton at home. Henry Lott and his older son, however, were watching from someplace in the yard where they were working, and, instead of rescuing the family in the cabin, they ran to get help. Meanwhile, the Indians plundered the cabin, went out and killed some cattle, took back their stolen horses, and left.

Tragically, young Milton had run out to get help and was later found frozen to death some 20 miles down the river (about three miles north of Boone). He may have been on his way to Red Rock where they had formerly lived. An historical marker later placed on his grave by the Madrid Historical Society may be seen less than a half a mile north of where County Road E26 crosses the Des Moines River. Mrs. Lott also fled the house and hid in the woods for a time. She took cold and died some days later. An obelisk in Vegor's Cemetery in the Boone Forks area in Webster County marks her grave.

In 1853, Lott learned that Sioux Chief Sidominadotah was camped in Humboldt County. He found him, and in retaliation



Milton Lott grave (G.D. Bennett) and Obelisk noting Mrs. Lott's grave (Heusinkveld)

for the deaths of his wife and son, Lott murdered the chief, his two squaws, and their four children. He took the chief's pony and fled the country.

Fearful of Indian vengeance, settlers became more paranoid than ever, and several of them moved "back to civilization."

It is believed that the Lott murders were the direct cause of the Spirit Lake Massacre in 1857, following which it was no longer safe for the Siouxs to remain in the Des Moines River area. The white man had won the land.

Indian ways of life were incompatible with those of the whites. The Indians needed large tracts of land for their seasonal hunt. They had no desire to kill more than for their immediate needs. On the other hand, the early white trappers, when they realized the enormous wealth obtainable from furs and skins, wantonly killed and decimated the herds of buffalo, and hunted as well for beaver, mink, fox, and other animals. The white settlers wanted to use the land intensively for crops. They cut down the timber and plowed the prairies, the natural habitat of the game animals. The land could not accommodate these two diverse ways of life.

Chapter 5

The Pioneers

1843 - mid-1850s

“They rise to mastery of wind and snow;
They go like soldiers grimly into strife
To colonize the plain.
They plow and sow,
And fertilize the sod with their own life,
As did the Indian and the buffalo.”

—Hamlin Garland

When the land west of the Red Rock Line was open to white settlers in 1845, they came walking, on horseback, by prairie schooner, or covered wagon into this unknown land. They came from New England, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and elsewhere. There were no roads or bridges across the rivers. They followed Indian trails; they forded rivers. The women and boys often walked behind the wagons, driving the cattle as they went. Small babies, pregnant women, and children who were ill were among the westward-bound. Sometimes, they had to stop for a burial along the way, and it was difficult to go on and leave the loved one behind. When a baby was born, they could stop only briefly as time was precious. The glorious prize they sought was a piece of land they could call their own.

The earliest settlers followed the Des Moines River Valley up from Keokuk; it was the most frequented of the early routes into central Iowa. The southeastern areas of the Greenbelt were thus occupied first. Marion County was the first to be settled and Webster County the last.

Traveling along at about 15 to 25 miles a day must have been very wearisome, but the landseekers beheld a grandeur that those who came at a later time would never see. Nature, in its pristine beauty, was an exotic, enchanting spectacle, new and unfamiliar to these trail blazers.

“When I first came to Marion County,” said pioneer settler, W.H.H. Barker, “the prairie grass was knee deep. There was a great quantity of big timber, and the water in the Des Moines River was so clear you could spear a fish five feet from the surface.” (Harvey: 1981, 7). (Already in Dr. Barker’s lifetime, he could report that the Des Moines was a muddy stream, so filled

with eroded soil and sewage that most of the fish had suffocated).

The bottomlands provided long vistas of soft blue-green meadows. The upland prairies were a waving sea of green, dotted with a changing panorama of colors, with crocuses, buttercups, violets, wild roses, tiger lilies, asters, sweet williams, and other flowers, each blooming in its own season.

In the swamplands and sloughs, especially of the northern counties, interspersed with the tall bluestem grasses and canes high enough to hide a man on horseback, the newcomers saw floating pink, white, and yellow lotuses and water lilies.

They beheld clear, cold springs issuing from the river banks. Every little brook and rivulet was as clear as crystal, its bottom reflecting the brilliant colors of red, white, and yellow stones.

In the woods, elk, wild turkey, and deer darted before their eyes; in the prairies they beheld the awesome sight of herds of buffalo, and startled wild prairie chickens rising in flight, almost darkening the skies; in the sloughs and ponds, they saw geese, ducks, and other waterfowl.

There were other forms of life not so pleasing. Snakes lay hidden in the tall grasses. Mosquitoes were a plague all along the way, especially in the wetland areas. Pioneer women told of wearing their hats and coats in the wagons even in the hottest weather in order to protect themselves from mosquitoes.

At night as they lay in their wagons or on the ground, they could view the stars and constellations shining brightly through unpolluted skies. They could hear the prairie chickens, said to be the musicians of the evening and the early morning.

The settler was more than likely looking for a location near the timber along the river, or even better at one of the creeks that flowed into the river. In these places, the timber extended farther out, and the land was a little higher, thus less subject to flooding. The creeks were easier to bridge or to ford than the river. When the settlers finally decided on a place to homestead, they felt as if they had found the Promised Land!

Problems in an Unfamiliar Environment

When a family stopped at their chosen site, everything had to be done at once—a shelter constructed, food procured, and seeds planted. They constructed log cabins if they lived in the

woodlands; dugouts or "soddies," in the prairies. Dayton's earliest settlers made their first homes in caves they dug in the hillsides. A fireplace, which would serve the double purpose of heating and cooking was another immediate necessity; cooking out of doors or in a hole dug at one end of the cabin was a temporary, most unsatisfactory expedient.



The pioneer E. B. Ruckman Cabin, Red Rock. (Harold Hastings)

A continuing anxiety was a daily supply of food. If it had not been for abundant game and wild fruits and berries, many families might not have been able to survive. Corn was foreign to the settlers and though they didn't like it that much, corn, converted into johnny cake, was their mainstay the first few years. One pioneer woman told of making the corn bread out of coarse corn meal which had been ground in the coffee grinder and then mixed with water often without soda. It was baked on a covered skillet over the coals or laid on a homemade "johnny cake board" tilted over the fire.

Corn was the Indians' greatest gift to the whites. Iowa's Henry Wallace said, "No matter how much the white man may accomplish in rearranging the corn genes, he may well be humble as he contemplates that corn breeder of 10,000 years ago" (Wallace: 1930, 217).

Getting the corn to a mill was a nightmare. It might take the men two or three weeks by horse or oxen and wagon to make the trip to Keokuk or Bonaparte. There were no bridges, and during high water the trip could be dangerous. They might have

to wait a week at the mill for their turn. Meanwhile, the women at home worried about the waning food supply, Indian intruders, wolves, and sick children.

The loneliness suffered by women confined to their houses for long days without even a neighbor in sight was eased as new families came westward. There was no more thrilling sight than that of a prairie schooner coming across the distant horizon, and high hopes would be entertained that the newcomers would decide to stay.

Ague (malaria), probably carried by mosquitoes, was a dread prospect. Its victims alternately shook with chills and burned with fever. A Marion County pioneer reported in his journal:

At the end of the bitter first winter, the entire family was stricken with ague. Finally, Father recovered sufficiently to go for provisions and medicine. Meanwhile, Mother kept a lonely vigil during his two-day absence. When she saw him approaching, she went to help him get to the house. Meanwhile, one of their twin babies died, but Father was so weakened he was forced to go to bed.

My heartbroken mother alone had to prepare her child for burial. She used her most prized wedding gift, a silk nightgown, for a shroud. The coffin was a walnut dresser drawer. Next morning, a neighbor dug a grave next to a large oak tree. Prayers were said, and the child was buried, no marker for its grave. (Harvey: 1981, 7).

Wolves were a real menace all up and down the river area. They killed livestock and were a peril to human beings as well. A dramatic story is told concerning Isaac and Jim Hook at the early settlement of Hook's Point (near Boone Forks), who were returning to their cabin with game they had killed. They noted they were being followed by a pack of wolves. Jim threw them a rabbit and Isaac shot into the pack, but the wolves, instead of being diverted, came on at a more rapid pace, yelping furiously. The Hooks made a run for the cabin and got in just in time. But the lead wolf had managed to get his foot and leg in the door and was pushing hard. Fortunately, the brothers had an axe on the wall, and while one pushed against the door, the other chopped off the wolf's foot. The wolf ran off, howling with pain, followed by the rest of the pack (Madsen: 1976, 4).

The chill sweep of the unaccustomed winter winds brought suffering and illness. The pioneers pasted many layers of newspapers on their walls for insulation; some kept their children in bed during the coldest days; the family huddled around the fireplace whenever possible.

Life on the Prairies

In time, the forested lands along the river and its tributaries had been claimed, and latecomers had no choice but prairie land. They were apprehensive about settling on the prairie as they had no experience in the grasslands. They felt lonely and homesick when out of sight of tall trees. To them, there was something fearful, perhaps poisonous in grassland soils. As they said, "It stands to reason that land which is good will grow trees."

The peculiar problems of living on the prairie are described by Carl E. Seashore (later Dean of the Graduate School, University of Iowa) who came with his parents from Sweden to settle in Boone County:

We had to fight grasshoppers with kerosene; we had to patrol the seeded ground against the clouds of game birds—ducks, geese, cranes, swans, and prairie chickens—which would pick up the sprouting wheat and corn, and at times darken the sky like a cloud.

Snowstorms were a severe menace on the treeless, windswept expanses. I rode horseback one whole night lost in a cold blizzard.

Prairie fires were a dreadful threat. I have seen a fire cloud like a gigantic torch advancing at tornado speed toward our prairie grass surroundings. (Seashore: 1941, 181-2).

When a family spotted the dread spectacle of an approaching prairie fire, they joined in feverish activity to try to save their cabin. They plowed furrows around the house, poured water on the sparks which jumped the fireguard, and flailed the fire with wet sacks.

Despite their destructiveness, there were also blessings associated with the prairie fires. After the fires had passed, thousands of pigeons and prairie chickens scrambled over the ground in search of seeds and insects. They were an easy and

bounteous source of meat. Prairie chicken eggs, white against the blackened ground, could be picked up by the pailful. They were not hurt by the fire.

The poorly drained prairie lands in the northern counties were interspersed with many lakes and sloughs. Large portions of the land could not be cultivated; they were wryly referred to as "liquid real estate." They were difficult for school children to traverse, as well as for horses and wagons. (Often the traveler had to go a great distance around the wet places in order to arrive at his destination).

Breaking prairie sod was an unfamiliar task and hard. It was better with oxen pulling the plow than with horses. The mosquitoes and flies made the horses so skittish that they could not be made to stick to the furrow. Seashore said, "Breaking the prairie was one of the most beautiful, most epochal, most pathetic things man ever did; one of the loveliest things ever created (the prairie) came to an end." (Seashore: 1944, 183).

Fuel for cooking and heating was difficult to procure. The settlers twisted the prairie grasses into knots, dried them, and used them for fuel. Some of the farmers traveled by wagon to dig coal out of the river banks. They loaded it on their wagons and then had to walk homeward along the wagon in the bitter cold and the sweeping gales of the prairies.

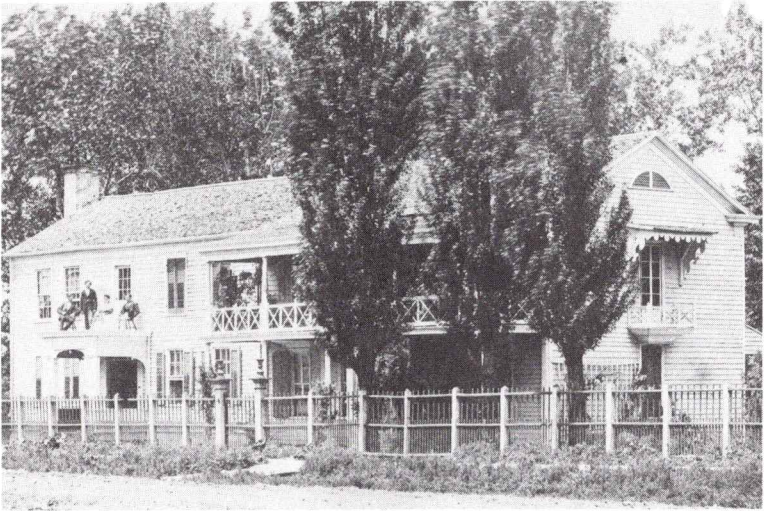
European Immigrants Come

A group of settlers who deliberately chose the prairie over the timbered river lands were the **Hollanders** who came to Marion County in 1847. They had come from a background of pastures and canals.

They differed from most settlers in that 700 of them came at one time, members of an association already formed in Holland, headed by Dominie (Reverend) H.P. Scholte. Many hundreds of additional Hollanders came in the next few years. The 1847 settlers had put their gold in an iron chest, and their leader went ahead and arranged for the purchase of land in Marion County, for which the families later drew lots.

Because of their large numbers, the Hollanders were able to tackle problems of the new land cooperatively; this meant a more rapid transformation of the landscape than most settlers were able to achieve. Also, they had the advantage of a greater amount of capital than most pioneers had. They amazed

everyone with whom they traded in that they paid in gold, whereas money was in short supply with most early settlers.

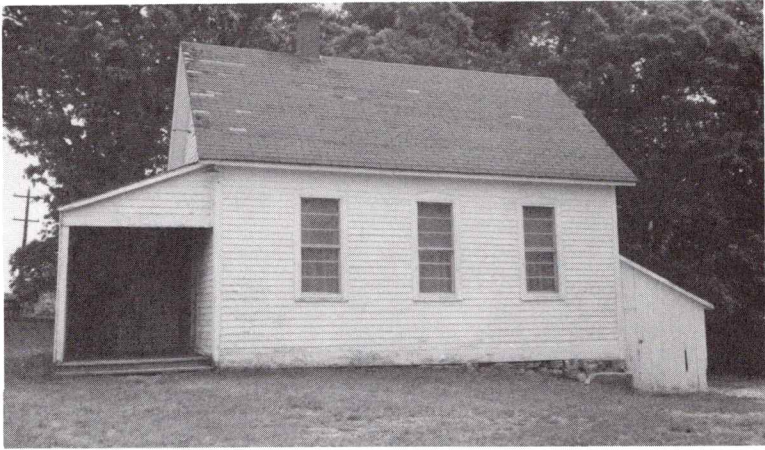


Twenty-seven room home built by Dominie H.P. Scholte in Pella in 1847. Continuously occupied by Scholte family until 1987. Now a museum. (John Vroom)

They were several miles from the river (and timber). They constructed dugouts with roofs of long slough hay for their first homes. These “soddies” were dusty and insect-ridden, but at least they were relatively warm. Pella, their town, was nicknamed “Strooistadt” (Strawtown).

The Hollanders soon had surplus goods to trade and so felt that they needed a port. In 1848, Dominie Scholte platted the town of **Amsterdam**, “the port of Pella” on the river. At the time Amsterdam was laid out, small boats were plying the river, and hopes were high that it would soon become an emporium of trade. Circulars were sent to the eastern states, advertising the advantages of the place and inviting capital investment. When steamboating declined and finally ceased altogether, the only business enterprise in Amsterdam was a lime and brick plant. Amsterdam soon ceased to exist.

Another European people who put their ethnic and societal stamp on the land were the **Swedes** who settled in Boone County at **Swede Point** (later known as **Madrid**). Mrs. Anna Dalander, a widow 54 years of age, was the organizer and leader



The Amsterdam School (present structure, 1882) survived the town by many years. It held classes until 1960. It is now used as a community center for residents of the rural area. (Heusinkveld)

of a party of 42 people, including her six adult children, who left Sweden, hoping to join their friends, the Peter Cassels, who had left Sweden a year before. At Keokuk, they bought oxen, horses, wagons, and other supplies and proceeded up the Des Moines River Valley.

Along the way at Fort Des Moines and other points, they asked about the Peter Cassel group but no one had heard of them. (It was learned later that the Cassels had settled along the Skunk rather than the Des Moines River).

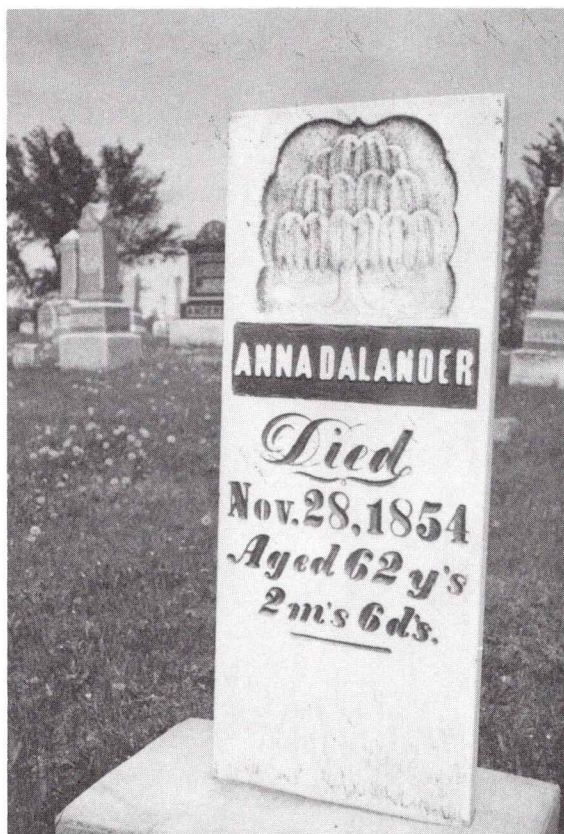
Four months after their departure from Sweden, in September 1846, the Dalander party was "lost in the wilderness" in Boone County. They decided that with winter coming on, they must stop. They chose a spot in the timber back some distance from the river near a spring of good water. Some of the men immediately began to construct shelters; they were used to working with wood in Sweden and had brought good Swedish axes, saws, and hammers. Others went in search of fish and game. It is said that the first thing the women did was to go to the spring to wash their clothing. Soon Charles Gaston, an ex-Dragon and the first settler in Boone County, found them and offered to sell them potatoes and squash and to help them build cabins. (Later he married one of the Dalander daughters).

Before their homes were finished, they slept in their wagons and in temporary shelters of brush and grass. Each morning,

they held worship services outside, the wilderness all around them.

Despite hardships, they survived the first winter. In the spring, they broke ground in the river lowlands with pick and spade and planted corn. Other Swedes came in the succeeding years and brought cows, chickens, and hogs. Life gradually became easier.

The Dalander Cemetery located one mile west and one mile north of Madrid, contains the graves of Anna Dalander and most of the other original settlers of the area.



Swede Point (Madrid) pioneer Anna Dalander's grave (Heusinkveld)

Both the Holland and the Swedish group made a permanent impact on the area they settled, in terms of church denominations, life goals, and family customs.

Other immigrants, usually in single family units, came from Ireland, Germany, England, and Norway and other parts of Europe. Each ethnic group helped to form the mosaic of peoples that is the Greenbelt.

The pioneers were indeed men and women "to match their mountains." Some seemed almost to thrive on challenge and hardship. Amazingly, there were those who, when comfortably settled, were stricken with wanderlust for lands farther west, and they packed up once again to trek into the great unknown. They felt the land here was getting too crowded.

Chapter 6

The Formative Years: Agriculture, Market Towns, Transportation, Larger Cities

1855-1865

In the middle 1850s, land seekers came almost in streams. Land offices were busy places as settlers anxiously and sight unseen chose the lands which would likely be their homes for the rest of their lives. The ferries ran across the river day and night, transporting settlers, their household goods, and animals. Lines of covered wagons whose occupants came from Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, and other places, moved westward across the land.

The Panic of 1857 slowed the influx of settlers and even, in fact, caused some already here to move westward to the gold fields of California and elsewhere. The Panic was in part the result of overextension of credit to farmers. Local banks ran out of money; farmers could not get money to pay their debts; land prices plummeted. J.H. Williams, a merchant in Homer (near Boone Forks), for example, could not collect money from his customers, so he accepted cattle. Finally, he had to give up his store and become a stock raiser instead. He used the town lots he had previously bought for speculation to pasture the cattle he had received in payment of debts (Folman: 1986, pp. xviii-xix).

Barter was common, even in non-depression times. There never was much money. Eggs and butter were exchanged at the stores for salt and matches and saleratus (baking powder) and other essential items.

Patterns of Agriculture and Farm Life

Agriculture was the dominant economic activity of the 1850s. Practically every family was engaged in agriculture, and sons and daughters, working from dawn to dusk, were all needed to provide the family with food and other necessities. The farm was an almost complete production unit. Apple and plum orchards, vegetable gardens, hens for eggs and meat, milk cattle, and pigs for pork all contributed to the family table.

Even the people in the small villages had their orchards, gardens, a dairy cow and chickens, as well as stables for their horses. The back yard of a town lot was a miniature farm.

The extent of self-sufficiency, which lasted many years, may be realized from this diary of William Leuty, son of William and Mary Leuty, Red Rock pioneers:

Mother used to shear the sheep, card the wool, spin it and weave it into cloth and make our clothes and blankets. She mixed black sheep wool and white to make a gray wool. She added indigo to the yarn to make a lovely blue. Walnut and butternut hulls were also used to color the wool, and she also added a chemical called madder. I did not have a store-bought suit of clothes until I was 18 years old.

For lighting lamps, she put goose grease in a dish with a rag for a wick. We also used to read by the light of the fireplace.

My father was an excellent cabinet maker; nearly all the furniture in our home was made by him from native walnut—corner cupboards, wardrobes, tables, desks, rocking chairs, spinning wheels, and rolling pins. He also made most of the burial caskets for the community. (Walker: 1972, 121).

Farming methods of the 1850s would be considered primitive and haphazard today. Corn and wheat were planted by making a hole in the soil with a hoe, dropping in seeds by hand, then covering it again with the hoe. Hay was mowed by a hand scythe; grain was cut with a cradle and beaten with a flail to thresh it. During the summer, pasture for the stock was obtained from the grasses of the bottomlands and the unfenced prairie lands, a situation similar to the days when the buffalo roamed over the land. Tons of prairie and slough grass were put up for winter supply of hay. Pigs rooted in the woods for their feed.

Farmers were learning what crops and livestock did well in the new environment. They found that wheat was not very successful on the prairie land, especially the first year after it had been broken. The grass roots needed a year to rot before wheat could be grown. Though they preferred wheat flour to corn meal, in time the more profitable corn replaced wheat entirely.

In the northern counties of the Greenbelt, farmers learned that the area was not suitable for sheep. Sheep developed foot rot and other diseases in the undrained wetlands. Sheep husban-

dry was therefore discontinued (Madsen: 1976,87).

Already in the 1850s, farmers were talking of getting better seeds and breeds. Perhaps the most substantial advance in cropping was the introduction of tame grasses for hay.

The farmers' chief frustration was that they had difficulty in getting their produce to market. Their first marketable produce was fat swine, which they drove on foot to Mississippi River markets. A wagon drawn by oxen generally accompanied a drove of hogs. It carried supplies for the men and transported the hogs that might have become crippled along the way. Unfortunately, the hogs were bound to lose considerable weight in the long walk to market.

The only source of power was the horse, without which the development of the area would have been impossible. He did an amazing amount of heavy work; he pulled the plow that broke the sod, he hauled the hay wagons, the logs to the sawmill and the lumber back, and the grains to the mills. The horse transported the family to church services, the doctor to deliver the babies, and the funeral caskets to the cemetery.

The family's horizons were determined by the distance a horse and wagon could go and return in a day. Saw and grist mills, and rural churches and schools and cemeteries were therefore numerous and closely spaced. Towns were located only two or three miles apart.

Transportation in the 1850s and 1860s

Two types of long-distance transportation were developed in the "wilderness" of the Greenbelt. They were the stage coach and the steamboat, each of which was in operation for only a few years.

For a brief time, about 20 years, the stagecoach was the magic link in bringing people together and in carrying the news.

Excitement ran high one day each week as the stagecoach came into sight, and its horses galloped up to the doors of the stage coach inn. Passengers stepped out—legislators, land speculators, civil war soldiers, family visitors—those who were sturdy enough to withstand the discomforts of the ride, such as the bumpiness, the anxieties suffered while fording the rivers and sloughs and often having to get out and push, the sticky hot or freezing temperatures depending on the season, and the cramped quarters.

A passenger describes the rigors of the stagecoach,

One cold January day, the stage from Fort Dodge as usual pulled in at Boone, but the driver did not move. He sat erect with the lines in his hands. He had frozen to death (Marsh: 1952, 229).

Another passenger wrote,

About midnight, we travelers reached Fort Des Moines. Driving to all the hotels, which were full, we were compelled to put up at the stage house. Since we left Chicago, I had not had one hour of sleep or change of clothing nor had I shaved. (Peckham: 1925, 233).

Town sites near the stagecoach line increased in value. The towns benefited financially as they provided lodging, meals, livery stables, and blacksmithing services. Some of the Greenbelt towns with stagecoach connections to Iowa City and Dubuque were Fort Des Moines, Fort Dodge, Homer, Hook's Point, Boone, and Madrid.

The stagecoach, drawn by teams of horses, gave way about 1870 to the railroad, the so-called "Iron Horse."

The steamboat had been a dream ever since the Des Moines River Navigation Plan to make the river navigable for big boats had been approved by Congress in 1846. The plan ultimately failed due to mismanagement and corruption. Following the flood of 1851, however, the river was so high that large steamboats could navigate the river. The following excerpt from the Knoxville Journal, September 25, 1930, recalls the great event:

Now came the steamboats! They were mostly of stern wheel class, driven by old-fashioned high pressure engines, and their loud puffing woke the echoes far and wide. Wood was used for generating steam. They stirred up the wildest commotion along the banks for five or six miles. People flocked to their shores to hail their advent.

They came loaded to the fullest capacity with all kinds of goods and merchandise and also passengers. They ran for many weeks, even until August of that year. Scarcely a day but a boat was passing either up or down.

Following are some of the steamboats by name: The Sangamon, the Skipper, the Alice, the Ed Manning,

the Ad Hine, the Clara Hine, the Des Moines City, and the Des Moines Valley.

The steamboats went on to Des Moines, and a few managed to go all the way to Fort Dodge when the river was high. During the Civil War, the steamboats were called to the Mississippi, and after that the railroads came. Steamboating on the Des Moines River ended in the early 1860s.

Towns in the 1850s were Related to Agriculture

The river towns existed to serve the farmers in the adjoining bottomlands. Saw mills and grist mills were erected in most towns; well-known mills included Parmelee Mill at Carlisle, the mill at Elk Rapids, Tyson's Mill at Lehigh, and Bell's Mill, Tunnel Mill and Chase Mill along the Boone River in Hamilton County (see Figures 10 and 11).

Nobody could have been more essential to the farmer than the village blacksmith. Not only did he shoe the horses to protect their feet as well as to give them a better footing when pulling a heavy load; he also fashioned the farmer's plow and other machinery by heating and melting metal in his flaming



Figure 10—The Parmelee Mill, Middle River, Carlisle.
1843-1880
(Archives, Carlisle Public Library)

forge and pounding it into shape. He repaired the housewife's leaking kettles and dishpans.

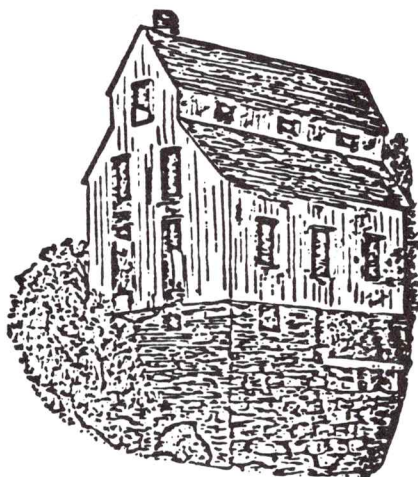


Figure 11—The Chase Mill, Hamilton County.
(Hamilton County Historical Society)

Every town had livery stables where one could board and lodge his horses or rent horses. A hotel or two in each town was necessary to accommodate those travelers who could not conduct their business and get back home in one day. Livery stables and hotels were vital in those towns which were stagecoach stops.

Small-scale manufacturing in the towns, in addition to that done by the blacksmith, included making wagons, barrels, bricks, and brooms. The potteries at Coalport in Marion County and Moingona in Boone County provided pottery cups and plates and crocks for the surrounding villages.

A number of the river villages were later deserted. When better means of transportation became possible, it was not necessary to have so many towns; some died because they were flooded out; others were missed by the railroad. They had been vital in their time and important in the agricultural development of the Des Moines River Valley area. Several of the early towns, both those which have disappeared and others which are alive today are described in the following pages (see Figure 1 for map giving their locations).

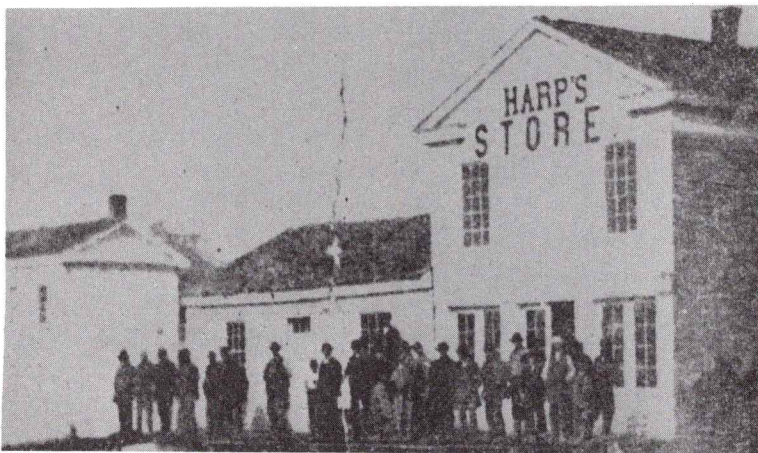
Early Towns Below the City of Des Moines

Red Rock, the earliest of the Greenbelt towns (1843), has previously been noted as an important Indian meeting place, for its historic Red Rock Line as related to the New Purchase of 1842, and for its notorious trading posts.

Following the removal of the Sac and Fox Indians and the consequent end of the trading posts, Red Rock settled down as a much quieter town. Settlers came from Ohio and Kentucky, and other states, and their descendants continued to live in Red Rock through the 120 years of its existence. The town came to include sawmills, a flour mill, two general stores, a doctor, a hotel, a schoolhouse built in 1854, a Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1855, and a post office. By 1870, it had a population of 250.

Goods, even semi-luxury goods, gradually became easier to obtain. William Leuty (who didn't wear a store-bought suit until he was 18), wrote:

I remember the first 50 cents I ever earned. I pulled weeds for my brother all summer. I took the money I earned and bought a Christmas present for my mother at Harp's Store in Red Rock. I bought six pressed glass sauce dishes for her. Three of these dishes are still left and have been passed down to my children (Walker: 1972, 122).



Harp's Store, Red Rock. Largest in the area in the 1850's. (Harold Hastings)

The scourge of Red Rock was periodic flooding. The devastating flood of 1851 was the first to be recorded. Indian tradition proclaimed that the Des Moines River had never before overflowed its banks, and the white man could find no evidence that it had (Briggs: 1934, 207). Already by 1851, occupants had disturbed the balance of nature.

By cutting down the timber and plowing the prairie, they had removed the thick carpet of vegetation which had helped to prevent flooding.

In the 1851 flood and those to follow, children were drowned and livestock also, crops were ruined, dead fish and snakes which washed up on the land made an almost unbearable stench, homes were inundated with the filthy waters, and merchandise in the stores was ruined. The people had to move to higher ground for a couple of weeks, and they had no more gotten back into their homes than the waters rose again, and the whole cycle was repeated.

When the steamboats came after the flood of 1851, Red Rock had high hopes of becoming an important river port, but once again it suffered bitter disappointment. The steamboats stopped instead at nearby Coalport where a great meander in the river proved a better landing place.

Red Rock through it all was tenacious in her struggle to survive and prosper. Her later role in the Greenbelt will be related in succeeding chapters.

Coalport, in Marion County, was platted in 1857 on a very large meander of the Des Moines River. Its pioneer inhabitants dug coal from the bluffs and sold it to fuel the passing steamboats. In fact, Coalport was the most important coaling station between Eddyville and Des Moines. As such, it was also a landing place for loading and unloading goods, and it became a prosperous little trading center.

William Welch, who had been a potter in his native North Carolina town, opened up a pottery in Coalport, using the good clays found in association with the coal deposits. The quality of his crocks and dishes was widely known, and his pottery was used in a large surrounding area.

The settlers built a Baptist church and a schoolhouse on Coal Ridge, a hill overlooking Coalport. The schoolhouse has long since been removed, but worship services are still held each Sunday morning in the old Coal Ridge Church, which also serves as a community center.



The funeral at Coal Ridge Baptist Church, August, 1988, of a longtime resident brought back many former neighbors. (Heusinkveld)

When the steamboat era came to an end, people started to move away and Coalport decreased in population from its 1875 high of 879. The final blow came in 1903, when the highest flood ever known swept through Coalport. After the waters receded, Coalport people were amazed to find that they were no longer on the river! The river had straightened its course by cutting through the big meander, and the main channel was now $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away (see Figure 12). Coalport was cut off from the source of its commercial existence and it faded away.

Oradell, known as **Pinchey** (a nickname attached to the town because of a certain tight-fisted grocer, who weighed out the groceries very, very carefully) was located in Marion County on the biggest bend ever known in the Des Moines River (see Figure 2). The big bend served as a landing place for goods brought by the steamboats (and after the steamboat era by smaller boats). Though it had a doctor, blacksmith, flour and sawmills, a school and a church, it was especially known for its general store. The store had a huckster wagon, which weekly covered a large route, selling staple groceries in exchange for eggs and other produce.

Though eight families still lived in Oradell in the early 1900s, the town has since disappeared. In fact, the big bend on which it was located had been cut off by the river, so that by 1900, Oradell was two miles away from the river.

Carlisle, in Polk County on the North River, about a mile and a half from the Des Moines River, was founded in 1851, the successor to the flourishing town of **Dudley**, which had been drowned out by the 1851 flood after a mere two-year existence. The new town was platted back from the river on somewhat higher ground.

Before Carlisle was founded, it was the site of a sawmill commissioned by the U.S. Government and built by John D. Parmelee to furnish lumber for the buildings at Fort Des Moines. After the abandonment of the fort, the Parmelee Mill, in operation from 1843 to 1880, worked day and night to serve the needs of civilians of a wide area (see Figure 10).

Nicholson's Flour Mill in Carlisle, built in 1854, was known all over central Iowa for its fine flour. Unfortunately, it burned down in 1875 and never was replaced. It was a great loss to the community as it was their main industry.

Carlisle was fortunate to be a steamboat stopping place. It was considered a great occasion when a steamboat came down the river. When the whistle could be heard around the bend in the river, school would be dismissed so that the children could run down to the river to see the boat. The steamboat carried dry goods and all the things needed on the frontier.

Carlisle's earliest function was to serve the farmers of the surrounding area. Its later history and changing functions will be discussed in succeeding chapters.

Adelphi, about six miles upstream from present-day Runnells, was platted in 1856 and aspired to be the trading center for farmers in the nearby bottomlands as well as to ship their products by river to the "Fort," as the new little town of Fort Des Moines was called.

Adelphi prospered for a time, having established a brick factory, a cooper's shop, a blacksmith shop, a wagon maker's shop, a lumber company, and a sawmill. It was the largest town in Camp Township, Polk County.

River traffic soon languished, however, and farmers moved off the bottomlands to higher, drier ground. Adelphi went into

decline. With the building of the Red Rock Dam, the few remaining buildings were moved away.

Early Towns Above the City of Des Moines

Saylorville was laid out in 1850 by John B. Saylor, one of Polk County's earliest settlers. His father, Benjamin Saylor, had received permission from Captain James Allen of Fort Des Moines to enter the land early, providing he would raise provisions for the fort. The father and sons raised beef and hay for Fort Des Moines and later for Fort Dodge.

Saylorville flourished for a time as one of the leading towns in Polk County. It had stores, schools, churches, and a post office. However, it was not able to become the Polk County seat as it had hoped, and later the railroad missed it, and it dwindled away. The post office was discontinued in 1855.

Today, its name is perpetuated in Saylorville Dam and Lake. Furthermore, its location between the new Saylorville recreational area and the City of Des Moines, makes it a desirable place to live. Presently, Saylorville is a township of the City of Des Moines and is an area of luxurious homes.

Polk City, known originally as **Big Creek**, was laid out by George Beebe in 1850 (though not incorporated until 1875) on the site of a former Indian village named Wauconsa. Its economy rested in large part in utilizing the abundant timber of the area, cherry, butternut, and cedar, in making lumber and furniture. Early settlers built various sawmills and gristmills. The town had an impressive number of trade and professional establishments. It was on the stage coach line from Des Moines to Boone. However, as time went by, Polk City was overshadowed by the growing city of Des Moines and in the early 1900's began to decline. Its revival as a result of the Saylorville Lake project will be discussed in a later chapter.

Madrid (originally **Swede Point**), the town established by the immigrant Swedes led by Mrs. Anna Dalander, became a very substantial farming area. Its sawmill, established by Eric and Swen Dalander and C.J. Cassel, was very profitable; settlers came from 50 miles away to get lumber, and the mill operated day and night.

Madrid, the first Swedish settlement in the Greenbelt, became in time the southern edge of a large area (see Figure 13) where

Swedish immigrants continued to settle. Language, customs, kinship ties, and church denominations were strongly Swedish.

Dayton, was settled by a number of Swedes, who came to Webster County from Illinois in 1857 and 1858 under the leadership of John Hedien. They found Illinois land to be too expensive and so migrated to the Swedish area of Iowa. **Swede Bend**, near present-day Stratford was also settled by Swedes (see Figure 13).

The immigrant Swedes had been strongly influenced by the pietist movement in Sweden; they studied the Bible and attended their churches faithfully. The Swedish Lutheran Church of their homeland became the established church in Madrid and throughout the area. An offshoot of the Lutheran Church was the Swedish Mission Covenant Church. The parent church of this new denomination was established in Swede Bend, July 4, 1868. This church was a reaction against the perceived moral decay of the traditional Lutheran Church. Its leader, Hans Bloom, from Swede Bend moved to Des Moines in 1868 and established a church there, which today is known as the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Lehigh, first known as Tyson's Mill, occupies one of the most beautiful spots along the Des Moines River. It was founded where Oliver Tyson had built a water-powered saw mill and later added a grist mill. Tyson's Mill served the settlers who in 1849 had established their claims at Boone Forks (area where the Boone River joins the Des Moines).

The area was wild and fearful and beautiful. Jacob Mericle, an early resident reported that he had escaped from a panther seven feet long and that he had killed between 60 and 70 buffaloes.

Sioux Indians, who had managed to escape removal from Iowa, harassed the settlers and stole their goods. Consequently, the settlers appealed to the U.S. troops at Fort Dodge for help.

Although the hardships suffered by the Lehigh people were fearful, they were excited about the richness of the area, the splendid hardwoods in the bluffs along the river and the amazing fertility of the flat prairie lands. They did not realize that the coal and clay in their river banks would one day make them very prosperous, as is recorded in the next chapter.

The Boone Forks settlers who numbered about 150, were the only cluster of people in the vast northern area. Their settle-

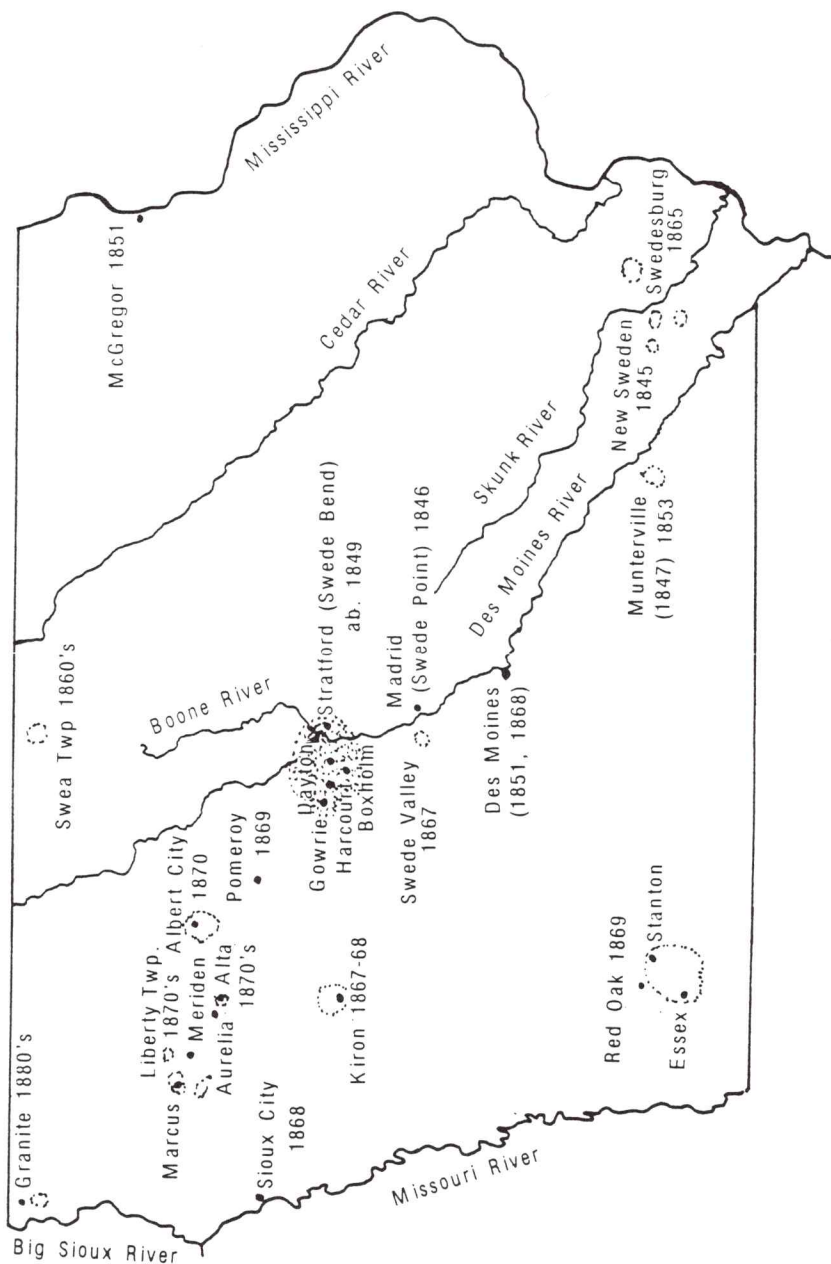


Figure 13—Swedish Settlements in Iowa.
(Swedish American Museum, Stratford)

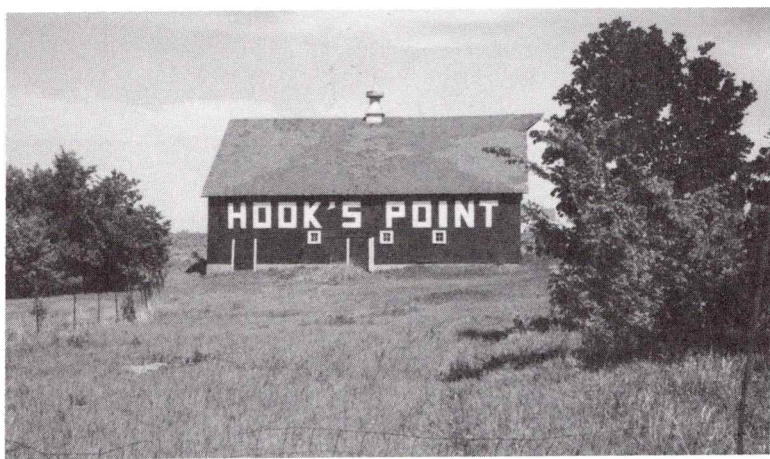
ment was astride the boundaries of Yell (presently Webster) and Risley (presently Hamilton) counties. Feeling this division to be a perilous disadvantage, the settlers petitioned the Iowa Legislature in 1851 to combine their two counties. A huge new county named Webster was created, and in 1853, the Legislature named Homer as its county seat.

Of the Boone Forks settlement, Andreas said, "They formed a Republic of their own. Law and justice were administered in their own way. Every man read the code of Iowa and expanded the law to suit himself." (1875, 369). From the beginning they were politically active.

Hook's Point, a thriving, close-knit settlement, also in the Boone Forks area, was founded by brothers Isaac and James Hook, who had come into the land in 1849. Isaac was a farmer-business man. His store was stocked with goods remarkable for those times, woolen comforters, knives, fur caps, shoes, harnesses, glass, ammunition, candy, and sugar.

The merchandise had to be hauled by horse and wagon, first from Keokuk, and in later times from Boone or Webster City. His store was the post office, the stagecoach inn, and general meeting place. (Madsen, 1976).

After a prosperous 30 years of existence, Hook's Point disappeared almost overnight when the railroad was built one mile south of the town through the present site of Stratford.



Site of old Hook's Point. (Heusinkveld)

Businesses and residents moved to the new town. A bright red barn with huge white lettering marks the spot where Hook's Point once was.

Webster City lies in a beautiful horseshoe bend of the Boone River. The site seemed an unlikely one, dotted as it was with lakes, swamps, and marshes, where muskrats built their houses.

Webster City had good leaders, who were strong boosters for the new town. Wilson Brewer led five families, a group of 22 people from their home in Indiana to this spot on the Boone. He served as their pathfinder, always walking ahead of the caravan of covered wagons so that he could find the best trail for them to follow. He platted the town of **Newcastle**, as Webster City was originally named. Then, he went back to Indiana, passing through Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin to interest others in joining the group. Some came, and the little settlement grew, and its future seemed assured.



Mound overlooking the Boone River burial place of Newcastle founder, Wilson Brewer. (Heusinkveld)

W.C. Willson, another early leader, was an entrepreneur. He managed to convince the Legislature, of which he was a member, to divide Webster County (really two counties in size) and thus create Hamilton County with Webster City as its county seat. He built mills, hotels, an opera house, small business

places, and houses, a total of 133 buildings. Later he succeeded in getting two railroads to lay their lines through the town. Webster City grew and prospered, as a county seat town and as a business center. Its population in 1987 was 8,500.

Greenbelt's Major Cities Established by the 1850s

The cities which became the premier cities of the area, Des Moines and Fort Dodge, both had the advantage of having been chosen as military forts and, as such, became the foci for travel to and from the fort. Both are on the Des Moines River at its confluence with a major tributary—the Raccoon River in the case of Des Moines, and Lizard Creek for Fort Dodge. Both became county seats, winning over strong contenders. Fort Dodge was to become the regional center of a large agricultural area; Des Moines eventually became the economic, governmental, and cultural center for the whole state.

Fort Des Moines was established in 1843 to protect the Indians from the encroachment of whites who might try to enter the area before Indian title to it was extinguished, and then in



Replica of Fort Des Moines No. 2. Birthplace of Des Moines. S.W. First and Elm Sts. (George Gitter)

1845 to remove the Indians from the land. The U.S. Government sent a garrison of soldiers to build a fort and also enlisted civilians who, in exchange for permission to enter the land early, would help in that task.

Under the direction of John Parmelee, soldiers and civilians constructed a saw mill at the present site of Carlisle on the Middle River, about one mile from the Des Moines River. They hauled the lumber over the old Dragoon Trail from the Parmelee Mill to Fort Des Moines (see Figure 10). It happened that Sac and Fox Chief Keokuk looked on as the soldiers erected 25 buildings for soldiers' barracks, horse stables, a storehouse, and a hospital. When the fort was completed in the fall of 1843, 99 soldiers were stationed there. (See Figure 14)

Civilians in the fort included a blacksmith, a cabinet maker, and two brothers name Ewing, who operated a trading post. Civilian Thomas Mitchell, who later founded the town of Mitchellville, was appointed as sutler (provisioner) for the fort. He was commissioned as well to operate an inn to lodge and feed government and military people going to and coming from the fort (at Apple Grove, present site of Thomas Mitchell Park), and also to build a bridge over Camp Creek.

The fort was in operation only three years, but its establishment had a lasting effect on the fortunes of Des Moines. After its abandonment in 1846, its buildings were sold to private bidders, and it became a little river town, still bearing the name Fort Des Moines. Naturally, it had an advantage over other river towns, in that it had inherited the buildings the Government had built as well as the bridges over Camp and Four Mile Creeks. It benefited by having roads (rutted trails) made by wagons which had hauled provisions for the fort.

Fort Des Moines almost immediately became Iowa's "gateway to the West." Settlers came from Keokuk and from Davenport and Iowa City to cross the ferry at Fort Des Moines. In the spring of 1850, 1,080 families with teams and wagons and livestock transferred across the river for points farther west. Needless to say, local residents profited by selling produce and small manufactures such as rifles and tools to west-bound settlers. Furthermore, certain land seekers changed their plans for going farther west and settled at Fort Des Moines instead. From 1853-56 the Government operated a district land office at Fort Des Moines for the sale of unoccupied western lands, thereby

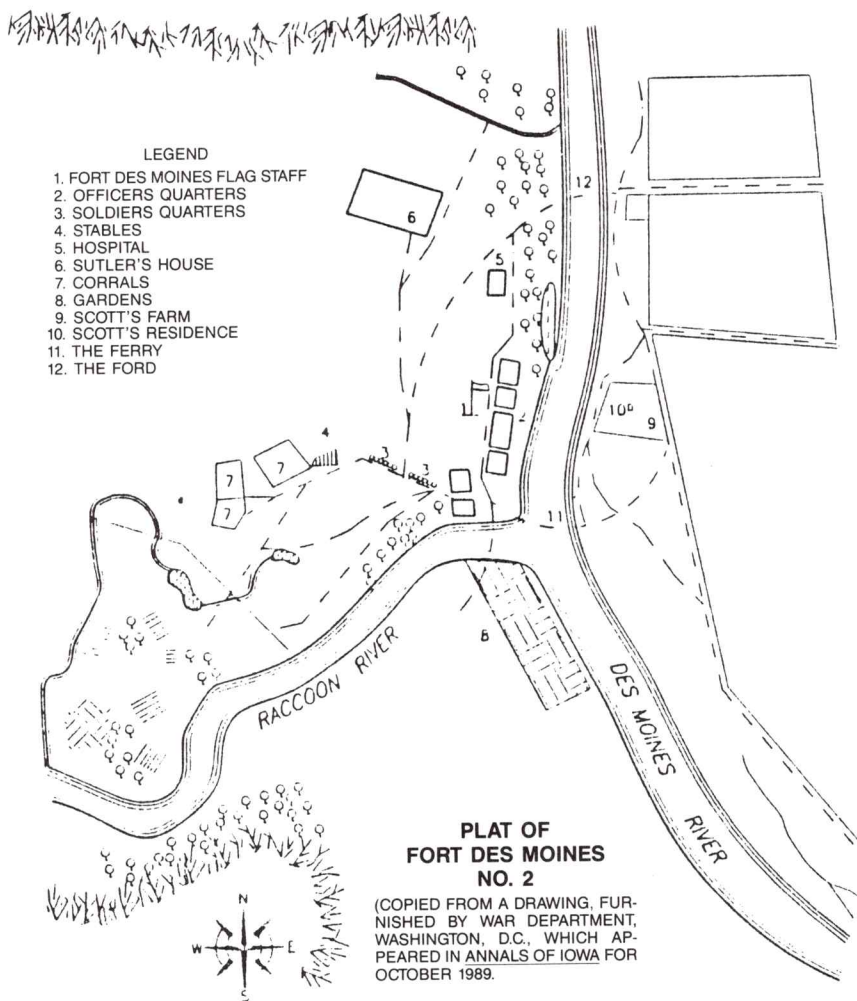


Figure 14—Plat of Fort Des Moines.
(Annals of Iowa, October 1899)

serving to increase the convergence of traffic through town; Fort Des Moines' population continued to increase.

Through the vigorous efforts of its 127 residents, Fort Des Moines managed in 1846 to convince the Iowa Legislature to name it as the county seat of Polk County. Several leading contending towns were Dudley, Saylorville, and Brookline, which since have become ghost towns, and Polk City. The Fort Des Moines contingent had managed to annex four Warren County townships so that Fort Des Moines would be more centrally

located in the county and thus be more eligible for the county seat nomination. Later, the Legislature ordered Polk County to return these townships to Warren County, but by then the decision had been made and Fort Des Moines was the county seat!

The relocation of the State capital in 1855 from Iowa City to Des Moines ("Fort" was henceforth dropped from its name), of course, assured the future growth of Des Moines. Land speculators had been pushing Monroe City as the new site for the capital; Red Rock seemed a likely place, but the havoc wrought by the Flood of 1851 had dimmed its prospects; Bellefontaine, on the Des Moines River in Mahaska County, was said to have lost on the first ballot by only one vote. Most of these contenders have since disappeared. Des Moines' population on the other hand, catapulted from 986 in 1850 to 7,000 by 1865.

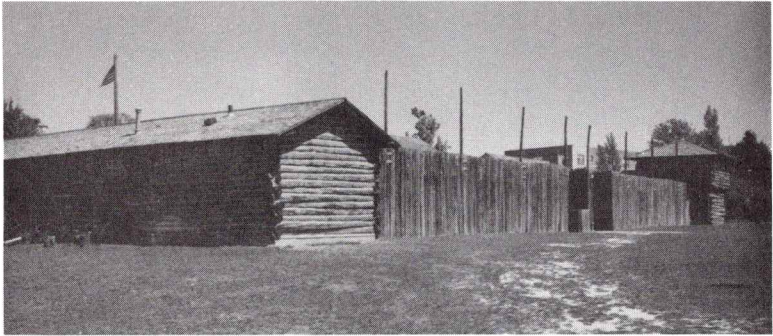


Des Moines after it became the capital. (Iowa State Historical Society)

Fort Dodge, the town which was the successor to the military post Fort Dodge (1850-53), got off to a late, slow start as compared to other Greenbelt towns. Fear of harassment from the Sioux Indians who had managed to escape military evacuation deterred settlement of the surrounding prairies. The fort had been abandoned too soon.

When the fort was abandoned in 1853, Major William Williams, who had been the sutler for the fort, purchased the

land and the 18 barracks on it from the Government. He became the founder for the new town, which he proceeded to lay out in streets and lots.



Replica of old Fort Dodge. It protected the Boone Forks people from the Sioux Indians. (Heusinkveld)

Fort Dodge's first impetus to growth was the acquisition of the Federal Land Office. A flood of land seekers swarmed into Fort Dodge, 1,000 of them the day the land office opened, November 1, 1855. Twenty-five land agents advertised their services, and more than 20,000 acres of land were auctioned off that first day.

In one of the bitterest county seat fights in the history of Iowa, Fort Dodge succeeded in wresting the Webster County seat from **Homer**. First, Fort Dodge arranged that Webster County would annex a part of Humboldt County, so as to put Fort Dodge nearer the center of the county. (Humboldt County is, as a result, one tier of townships smaller than the surrounding counties). Then, Fort Dodge, with Webster City's help, called for an election to settle the location of the county seat. As a result of ballot box stuffing (likely both parties were guilty of it), Fort Dodge won.

When Homer disputed the election, John Duncombe of Fort Dodge challenged a Homer attorney, John D. Maxwell, to a wrestling match. After an hour's bout in Homer's public square, Duncombe was declared the winner of the match and Fort Dodge of the county seat.

By a pre-arranged agreement with Webster City (as previously noted), the area was restored to its original two counties in 1856. Fort Dodge became the county seat of Webster County, and

Webster City, the county seat of the newly named Hamilton County. Homer, the ousted county seat (and largest town of the area), began its decline and eventual demise. A shift of power from the Boone Forks area to the new centers, Fort Dodge and Webster City, had taken place.

Fort Dodge grew slowly because of its frontier location and lack of adequate transportation. The first breakthrough came when the Western Stagecoach Company extended its line from Dubuque to Fort Dodge, thus providing weekly passenger and mail service. The line continued on to Sioux City, a dangerous route because of sloughs, lack of roads, and hostile Indians. Fort Dodge became the leading marketing town in northwest Iowa.

Excitement knew no bounds in the 1850s when the first Des Moines River steamboats pulled into view. The steamboats brought trade into Fort Dodge for a few years but were abandoned because of the return of low water and also because of Civil War need for these boats. The stagecoach lasted for a few more years, then gave way to the railroads in the 1860's. Fort Dodge waited anxiously for the railroad, and finally the east-west line (later known as the Illinois Central) came to them in 1869.

Summary

By 1865, crop and livestock patterns were fairly well established. Almost all of the people lived on farms. The function of the towns was to provide services for the farmers.

The main source of power was animate, man and the horse. Though farming demanded an incredible amount of muscle and long work days, the farmers, on looking back, said it was a wonderful way of life, as the family worked together in the challenge of wresting a living from the land.

The farmers' major frustration was inadequate transportation to get their produce to market. The ferry, the steamboat, and the stagecoach all helped but did not meet the total need.

A mosaic of small towns had been platted along the river, especially in the area south of Des Moines. Some of these were but "paper towns" and never did exist. The location of towns had been something of a gamble, and in instances where poor decisions had been made, the towns were already declining by 1865. Des Moines and Fort Dodge, which were to become the major towns, had already been established and were flourishing.

Chapter 7

The Railroad-Coal Era

1865-1920s

"The true history of the United States is the history of transportation...in which the names of the railroad presidents are more significant than those of the presidents of the United States"

—Phillip Guedalla

By 1865, the Civil War was over. The fears, the suffering, the bereavements and the economic privations of those terrible years were past.

The southern counties were still more heavily populated than those to the north. In 1870, Marion County had a density of 39 per square mile and Polk 41, whereas Hamilton County had only 9, and Webster County had 10. Boone and Dallas Counties in the center of the Greenbelt had 20 people per square mile (from 1870 census figures).

Developments in Agriculture, 1865-1920s

A major development in agriculture during this period was getting all the land into cultivation. Ninety percent of the land in Webster County was classified by the Census as unimproved



Dave Miller breaking prairie sod, Webster County. (Marjorie Blair)

in 1870, and 52 percent of the land in Marion County was thus classified. Up to this time, many of the prairie lands had not been broken. That task was completed early during this period.

A really formidable task was draining the wetlands. The farmers who lived in the young glaciated lands of Boone, Webster, and Hamilton counties, literally had to create their land out of the swamps.

The acres in sloughs and undrained marshes on a farm was often greater than the acres under cultivation. These farmers raised crops only on the "high places." Uplands sold for \$100 an acre, the wetlands for only \$5 an acre.

Draining the land was too great a task for an individual farmer. Therefore, Webster County, for example, was formed into drainage districts in 1900, and the first big drainage ditches dredged. Then, farmers plowed out smaller ditches leading to the "big ditch." Draining one small field at a time, it took some farmers as long as 20 years to reclaim all their land, depending on the amount of money they had available.

After the land was drained, the farmers found that much of it was underlain with peat and hard alkaline deposits, which required the application of potash to make it arable. By the



Excavating the "big ditch," Webster County. (Majorie Blair)

1920's, thousand of miles of clay tiles had been laid and the land corrected of its deficiencies, and some of the most fertile soils in the world had been created. "The blessed advent of the drainage ditch was to mark the greatest economic change in the area since the arrival of the railroad." (Yungclas: 1980, 68).

Another problem of the period concerned the question of land titles. In 1846, Congress had contracted with the Des Moines River Valley Navigation Company to give the company alternate sections of public land along the Des Moines River as payment for making the river navigable. The contract evidently was not clear as to the northern extent of these lands. The company claimed lands as far north as Fort Dodge, though the Government intention had been that they should extend only up to Des Moines. As a result farmers had settled on company land adjoining the river north of Des Moines.

The company had soon ended in bankruptcy and therefore did not fulfill its part of the contract, but it nevertheless now claimed these lands. The courts ruled that according to the contract, the company had the right to the lands up to Fort Dodge.

The lands affected were in Boone, Hamilton, and Webster Counties. Farmers who had settled on the land many years earlier were displaced, receiving only a pittance for the improvements they had made. In some cases, farmer resistance, riots, and violence were so strong (and the law enforcement officers of the area so reluctant to act) that the company abandoned its claims (Madsen: 1976, 30-31).

A number of technological improvements were made during the decades around the turn of the century. Better care of livestock included use of prepared feeds and commercial remedies for animal diseases. The early 1900s was an era of building big barns, so that livestock no longer had to fend for themselves out of doors in all kinds of weather.

Farming was less back breaking as new types of farm machinery were invented, including horse drawn cultivators, binders, and corn planters, mowers to cut the hay and rakes to pile it up, and manure spreaders. The horse continued to be the principal source of power, though gasoline engines were used to grind grain and pump water.

The problem of transporting machinery to the farms loomed large. The most wonderful development for any farmer was the coming of the railroad!

The Miracle of the Railroad

Hopes soared as railroad companies built their lines westward from the developed areas of the East. Groups, and individuals, too, made offers of land and money to induce the railroads to route lines through their areas. Bribes and "under the table" deals were made and received. In several instances, a town had been assured of the railroad, only for some mysterious reason to have it routed elsewhere. By a mere stroke of a draftsman's pen, often in some far distant office, a community could be doomed — or grow and become prosperous.

Railroads vied with one another to service certain promising areas, and in some places built their lines only a mile or so apart, as in the case of the Burlington and the Rock Island which built their lines on either side of the river in Marion County. Because of such unwise decisions, a number of companies went into receivership, got new financing, and reorganized under a new name. It became almost dizzying to remember the railroads by name unless one lived in the immediate area and could keep abreast of the changes.

Excitement ran high when the railroad lines were being built into an area. Railroad workers from the outside, as well as men and teams hired from the area, toiled to scrape up the dirt and to pile it up to build the grade (in some instances, the grade had to be very high to prevent floodwaters from reaching the rails), then to put down the railroad ties, and finally to fasten down the rails. Meanwhile, carpenters were building the depot. When the first train came whistling through a town, crowds gathered in wild celebration.

The railroad helped to unlock the Greenbelt's treasures. Farmland had not been used to its maximum potential because of the problems involved in marketing. Now the trains rolled through the towns, carrying livestock and grain to Chicago and other markets. The farmer could specialize in producing those items which would bring him the greatest profits. He was in a money economy. He could buy implements and supplies, and the railroad could transport them to his town.

The Railroad and Coal—A Boon to the Economy

Coal, the Greenbelt's second greatest resource (after farmland) brought prosperity such as had not been known before. It will be recalled that coal was a legacy from the an-

cient Pennsylvanian seas; the river, by its downcutting, helped to expose the coal and make it easy to mine. Previously, a little coal had been dug out of the banks by hand for home heating or for fueling the steamboats.

Coal and the railroads had a symbiotic relationship. The railroads needed coal for fuel; they were, in most cases, the principal market for the coal. Coal mines needed the railroad to ship their heavy, bulky product to all parts of the nation. Consequently, the railroad companies, in many instances, owned the mines. They laid spurs to the various mines and removed them when the coal was gone.

Railroad-Coal companies bought land, brought in mining machinery, and recruited local labor as well as bringing in labor from other parts of the country, including many immigrants; they built houses for the miners, organized schools, opened company stores, and started mining coal. A new type of settlement was born in the Greenbelt, the coal mining camp.

The Railroad—A Means to an Improved Quality of Life

The trains brought the world to the people of the Greenbelt. Residents from Swan boarded the Burlington, and those from Fort Dodge, the Interurban, to go to Des Moines for the State Fair. The children in the mining camps near Madrid took the train to and from the high school in Madrid, and from Fraser, miners' children went to high school in Boone. High school finally became available for the miners' and farmers' children.

The general store operator in Fifield boarded the Wabash and spent the day searching the wholesale houses on Court Avenue in Des Moines for mirrors, beds, and dishes to stock her store, and she could expect to receive them the next day or two at her depot. The Pella furniture dealer flagged down the Wabash at Howell Station and went to Chicago on a buying trip.

Immigrants who came westward to work in the coal mines, or on farms, or perhaps in Des Moines, traveled by train rather than by covered wagon.

Boone residents saw and heard President McKinley when he came on the train in 1898, and President Taft in 1909. Many gathered at railroad stations all along the way and stood at attention as the funeral train bearing the body of President Harding passed through.

Women went into Fort Dodge or Des Moines for a day of shop-

ping or visiting. The people of Madrid served sandwiches to World War I soldiers when the trains stopped for a soldiers' exercise session. Sadly, the trains took sons and husbands off to war, and now and then, the funeral hearse met the trains that carried the bodies of the slain.

The railroads carried overalls, oak furniture, ready-made dresses, toys, underwear, and tools, even diamond rings for the newly engaged, from Sears and Roebuck in Chicago. It was the heyday of the mail order houses. The trains carried the cream cans and eggs to the market. They brought oranges and other exotic fruits and vegetables from far-off places.

Farmers in their fields and housewives in their kitchens checked the time of day by the passing of the trains. The Swedes in Dayton called the Chicago and Northwestern afternoon train the "Coffee Train," because when the train whistled its way through town, they knew it was time for their afternoon coffee and rusks.

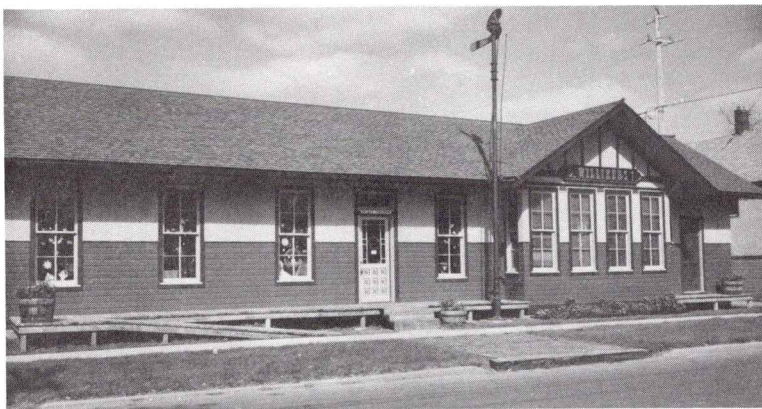
Des Moines, Focus Of Railroads

There was no question, of course, but that railroad companies would be eager to lay their lines through the State Capital. The first to come was the Des Moines Valley Railroad, which was laid through Des Moines in 1866. Later called the Rock Island, it turned out to be the most significant line for the city and hired the largest number of employees. In 1892, the Rock Island located its division office and repair headquarters in an adjoining agricultural settlement on the Raccoon River, which came to be known as **Valley Junction**.

Valley Junction became famous as a railroad center! Principally, it was the center for the Rock Island interests in Iowa; also the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad intersected with the Rock Island at this point. The shops and division headquarters of the Des Moines and Fort Dodge Railroad were later moved to Valley Junction.

In 1893, twenty-six passenger trains passed through the little town each day. Valley Junction was incorporated in 1893. Eventually, it became the nucleus of what is now prestigious, fashionable West Des Moines.

Valley Junction was a most unlikely spot for a major town. The Raccoon River overflowed its banks so often that the streets were little more than mudholes. The railroad men were a rough



The old Valley Junction depot has been “spruced up” and now houses smart boutiques. (Heusinkveld)

lot; the several hotels that housed the men (it was said that there were 400 railroaders in the first years) were scenes of drinking, gambling, and violence. In 1922, a strike involving 600 rail workers resulted in hunger and desperation, even suicide, among the men. Mexican non-unionized workers were brought in; they were housed in box cars. Many of these workers remained in Valley Junction and became respectable citizens.

By 1884, there were 14 rail lines through the Des Moines area, some of which were later consolidated.

With the coming of the railroads, **Des Moines** became a leader in wholesaling, especially for groceries, hardware, lumber, paper, and women's apparel. Court Avenue was the location for rail loading and unloading and warehouse functions.

As interurban trains brought customers from surrounding areas into Des Moines for shopping, large retail stores were established. Younkers was opened in 1874. The Utica, Frankels, and Plumbs stores followed soon after. Retail stores and offices centered on Walnut Street.

Manufacturing establishments flourished in Des Moines, meat packing, flour mills, breweries, saddle and harness shops, wagon factories, printing shops, men's clothing, millinery, and various other factories.

Des Moines early became one of the Nation's leaders in the insurance business. Frederick Hubbell's Equitable Life Insurance Company (founded in 1867) and Banker's Life under the able leadership of Gerard Scholte Nollen (founded in 1879)

became giant companies and were followed by a host of other insurance companies in Des Moines.

Stately mansions, spawned by the new wealth, mushroomed in Des Moines, among them the Hoyt Sherman home on Woodland Avenue, the Terrace Hill home of the Hubbells, the Owl Head district homes south of Grand Avenue, and Carl Weeks' Salisbury House on Tonawanda Drive.

Public buildings as fine as any in the nation were part of Des Moines' "City Beautiful" Plan. At the turn of the century, magnificent Government buildings were constructed on the riverfront—the City Library, the Des Moines Post Office, the Federal Building, the Municipal Building (City Hall), the Municipal Court Building, and the Armory. Their architectural harmony and river location helped to make Des Moines one of the unique cities of America in terms of city planning.

Whereas the population of Des Moines had been less than 1,000 in 1860, it catapulted to 12,500 in 1870, and by 1885, it numbered 32,500. The railroads had been very good for Des Moines.

The Railroads Made And Unmade Towns

Gloom prevailed in those towns which were missed by the railroads. They had no prospect for growth. Many declined and died. In other instances, the laying of the railroad was the impetus for the establishment of new towns.

Towns South Of Des Moines

Red Rock, the oldest town in the Greenbelt, with a population of 250 in 1870, was twice disillusioned in its hopes for rail connections. The Rock Island, which came through the Des Moines Valley in 1867, was routed six miles to the north of Red Rock, at which spot the railroad founded the new town of **Otley**. A number of Red Rock residents moved to Otley, and Harp's Store, Red Rock's largest business establishment, was moved bodily to the new town. Harp's Store, now that it had railroad service, expanded its operations by buying and selling livestock.

In 1887, the Wabash missed Red Rock by only a mile, and the new town of **Cordova** was founded. Stockyards and a grain elevator were set up in the upstart new town. Red Rock farmers had to haul their produce to Cordova for shipping. Interestingly, the two towns developed something of a symbiotic relation-



Joseph Templeton farm home, Red Rock, 1870s, (Blanche Templeton)

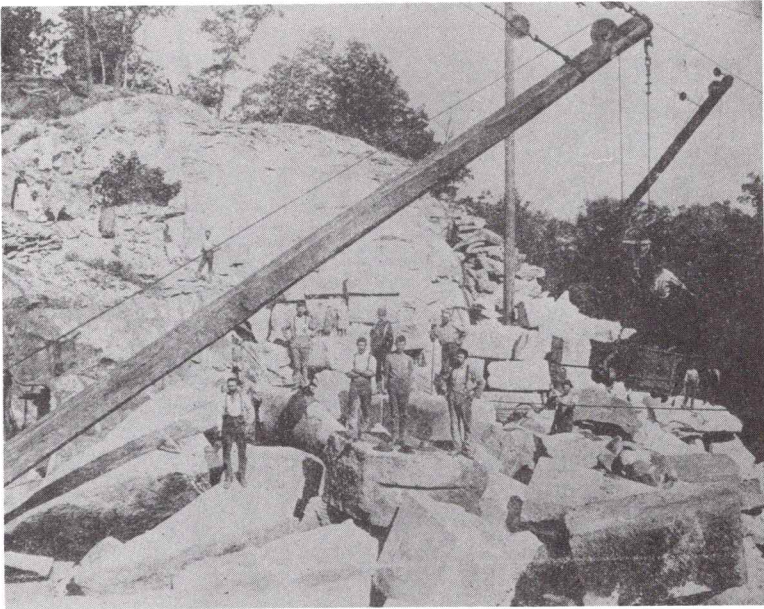
ship. Cordova was the shipping center; Red Rock served as the school and the church and social center for the two towns. Cordova was always a small village.

Hope was renewed for Red Rock when the Wabash built a spur to Red Rock's sandstone bluffs; it appeared the town would have a prosperous future in quarrying. This was true for a short time, but the stone was too soft for building purposes, and the venture was abandoned.

Red Rock's population declined, but the town did retain its identity for a good many more years. The story of Red Rock will be continued in a later chapter.

Red Rock must have been envious of **Fifield**, a small nearby hamlet, which not only got a depot on the Wabash, but had a railroad repair crew stationed there. It was also a coaling and a watering station for the railroad. A big cylindrical tank 15 to 20 feet high, held the water which the trains needed to fill their steam boilers. A livestock chute at the Fifield railroad station was used by farmers for miles around, who drove their hogs on foot to Fifield for shipping to markets.

Fifield had a good general store, a creamery which received cream from a comparatively large area and made excellent butter, and shipped it out by railroad, an ice house, and a Dutch Reformed Church, called the De Haai Church. Their minister who came from Coalport, rowed across the river each Sunday



Sandstone (the famous red rock) quarry at Red Rock, 1891. (Harold Hastings)

in the summer and skated across the ice in the winter time to officiate at the services.

Fifield's problem was that it was too near to Pella and was overshadowed by the larger town. Businesses closed, and Fifield faded and died.

Both Cordova and Fifield were examples of the fact that having the railroad was not enough in itself to save a town from extinction. **Percy** and **Dunreath**, two small hamlets in the northwest part of Marion County, were further proof of this fact. Because of the early date of Marion County's settlement, a large number of towns were laid out, necessary at the time, but it was impossible for all of them to survive when a more advanced mode of transportation than the horse and wagon was introduced.

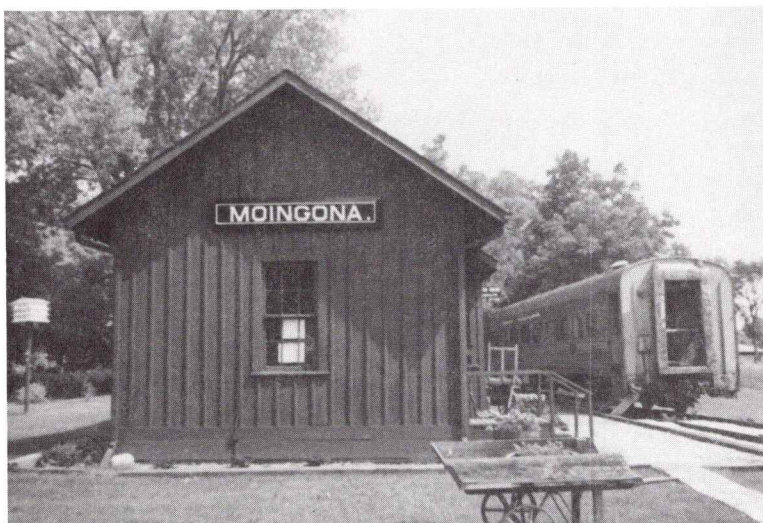
Towns North of Des Moines

Named in honor of Captain Nathan Boone, **Boonesboro**, located on the flat plain about one and one-half miles southeast from present-day Boone, had been named the county seat of Boone County in 1851. In 1854, it had about 200 inhabitants,

a couple of stores, a hotel, and a high-quality pottery works; it was a thriving town.

Boonesboro offered the Chicago and North Western Railroad (as it later came to be known) 20 acres of land for a depot and \$10,000 in cash to locate their line through town. The railroad accepted the offer but later reneged on its agreement, presumably because of better offers. Instead, the company laid the line through **Montana** (later known as Boone). Boonesboro lost its county seat status to Boone in 1888. A great deal of bitterness continued between these two towns, but by 1892, Boone and Boonesboro had grown together, Division Street marking the former boundary between them. The courthouse, the third to be built, remains in its original location on State Street in old Boonesboro.

Moingona (believed to be the Indian name for the Des Moines River) also profited by the Chicago and North Western Railroad's decision to bypass Boonesboro and to choose a southward course from Boone leading through Moingona. Moingona was platted in 1866, one year after Boone. It mined and shipped out coal, and became famous for its potteries. It grew at a phenomenal rate and by 1868, had 25 business establishments, and a population of 900.



Kate Shelly Memorial Park and Railroad Museum, Moingona.
(Heusinkveld)

For various reasons, pottery making ceased in 1877. Coal miners went on strike and moved to more promising places. The final blow came in 1901 when the Chicago and North Western Railroad decided to shorten its route out of Boone by building High Bridge over the Des Moines River, and in the process bypass Moingona. Moingona became all but a ghost town.

However, Moingona was memorialized forever when during a severe rainstorm the night of July 6, 1881, Kate Shelley, a fifteen-year old rural Moingona girl, prevented the wreck of a midnight passenger train by crawling across a 600-foot long bridge to notify the Moingona station agent that the bridge over Honey Creek had washed out. The agent flagged down the approaching train, and many lives were saved. Kate Shelley Memorial Park in Moingona commemorates the event. It has a replica of the Moingona depot, and next to it an old passenger train coach.

Xenia, a couple of miles west of Madrid, had, judging from the size of its cemetery, a fair number of people at one time. Xenia was confident that the Milwaukee Railroad would stop at their town, but railroad officials said that the terrain was too hilly, and that the trains, if once stopped, would become stalled while trying to start up again.

They built the depot a couple of miles to the west where they founded the town of **Woodward**. Xenia faded, and now only a large billboard announces the site where Xenia once stood.

Stratford was the only good-sized town on the railroad which was not associated with coal. It incorporated ten small farming neighborhoods and villages which had flourished in the area, all of which were bypassed by the railroads (see Figure 15). The elevator on Stratford's skyline is a symbol of its function, that of serving farmers of the fertile prairie soils that lay all around. In 1885, just four years after its founding, Stratford had 23 business firms, which included corn and livestock buyers, stock yards, wagon and plow shops, and a large creamery.

Stratford's location in the marshy lands of Hamilton County necessitated a lot of tiling right in town. In 1907, they passed an ordinance to prohibit hitching posts in town because the stomping of the horses caused ruts and holes to form in the streets, as well as splashing mud on the windows of the store buildings.

Stratford's street names indicate something of the town's

cultural awareness. They include Shakespeare, which is the main street, Goldsmith, Milton, Burns, Dryden, and Byron (see Figure 16).

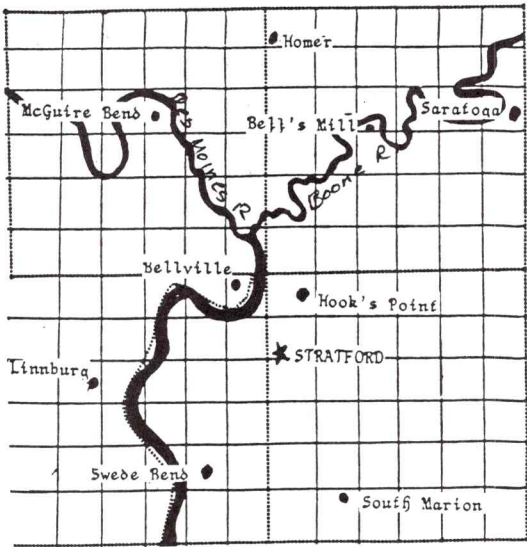


Figure 15—Stratford, the New Railroad Town (1881), Absorbed Neighboring Settlements (Stratford Courier)

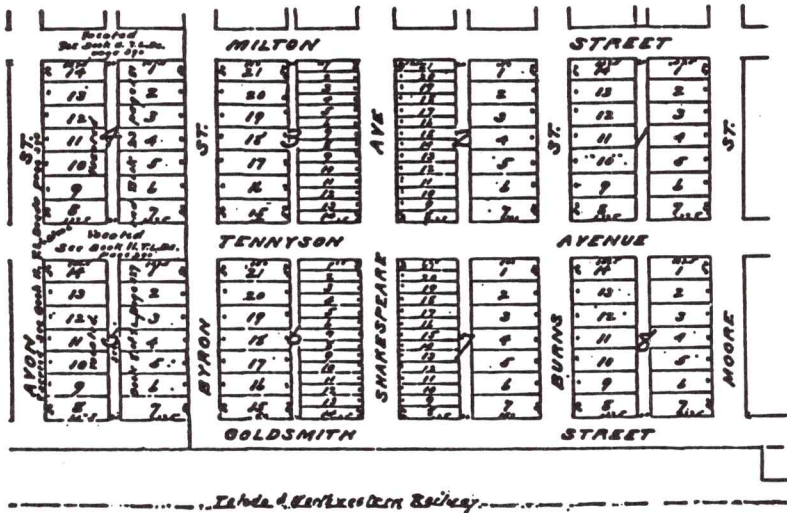


Figure 16—Stratford Town Plat. Stratford is unique for its literary named streets. (Stratford Courier)

COAL MINING REGIONS

Coal mining during the 19th and early 20th centuries effected almost unbelievable change in population numbers, ethnic strains, and in the establishment of new towns.

Areas of rich coal deposits included (1) Harvey (Marion County); (2) Swan-Runnells (near the Marion-Polk County boundary); (3) Des Moines area, especially to the south of Des Moines; (4) Madrid area (Boone County); (5) Boone-Fraser area; (6) Lehigh area (Webster County); and (7) Fort Dodge. Each of these areas will be discussed briefly as to their role during the coal-mining period. Various of these towns will be treated in the next chapter for a continuation of their development.

(1) Harvey

Harvey was platted in 1876 along the Des Moines River in Marion County (below the present Red Rock dam). It had not only excellent deposits of coal, but also white ceramic clay, superior sand and gravel, fine timber stands, and potential water power. Its future prosperity seemed certain. Railroads vied to lay their lines through Harvey, with the result that Harvey finally had three railroads through town, the Wabash, the Burlington, and the Rock Island.

Several coal companies mined coal for a number of years, and miners became an important, permanent element of the town. The Rock Island Railroad invested in Harvey's sand and gravel pits, bridged the river and built a spur to these deposits.

Harvey became a leading retailing center. Its large department stores carried the latest fashions and exotic items, even oysters and ice cream because they had frequent railroad service to Chicago. Harvey was, in fact, referred to as the "Chicago of Iowa."

Harvey manufactured bricks and tiles, cement blocks, washing machines, and paper and had a printing shop.

Harvey seemed to have all the ingredients necessary for success, yet because of several devastating fires, lack of good business leadership, and the withdrawal of promised capital, factories closed, and the trains soon ran empty through Harvey. The last business establishment, a grocery store, closed in December, 1986. Its remaining population (275) commute to work to Pella and Knoxville.

(2) **Swan-Runnells Area** (Marion-Polk County border)

Swan was platted in 1879 by the Burlington Railroad. Settlers from the East had entered the area already in 1874 and had become prosperous farmers, raising cattle and horses. They traded in the nearby village of **Wheeling**. The establishment of Swan marked the end for Wheeling, and its residents moved to the new town.

Three companies bought coal lands along the river, brought 600 miners into the town, and began mining. Swan became a leading mining, business, and school center. It was spoken of as a rowdy town with many taverns.

Swan is proud to recall that in 1884 they saved the Ringling Brothers Circus from bankruptcy by inviting them to perform for an extended time in Swan, at a time when other towns could not afford to book them. In gratitude, "The Greatest Show on Earth," a movie about this circus was premiered in the Swan High School auditorium in 1952.

Swan's prosperity lasted only as long as there was coal. In the early 1900's Swan began a long period of decline.

Morgan Valley, tucked away in a beautiful spot just across the river from Swan, was a bustling coal town in the 1880's. The Wabash Railroad ran through the town and also ran spurs to the various coal beds. Morgan Valley had a number of stores, a school, a brick plant, a depot, a church, and a post office (from 1891 to 1903). When the mines were worked out, the population moved away. The Morgan Valley Christian Church held its last service on September 11, 1988, after 90 years of use.

Runnells, in southeastern Polk County, was platted by the Wabash Railroad in 1881. In its heyday, Runnells was a busy coal mining and agricultural shipping town. At one time, 30 mines of varying depth, deep shaft mines as well shallower drift mines, were worked. The town itself was honeycombed with underlying layers of coal. Today, when wells are drilled or basements dug, the builder may be surprised by the exposure of long forgotten old coal shafts.

Runnells became the Wabash's highest income producer between Albia and Des Moines, shipping livestock and grain as well as coal. Passengers who wished to shop in Des Moines for a day could ride the Wabash for 37 cents each way.

Runnells suffered a disastrous fire in 1892, which burned a large share of the business district. When the coal deposits

declined, operations ceased, and the town began to decline in population from its high of 1,400 to about 380 today (1988). The effects of the Red Rock Dam on Runnells will be discussed in a later section.

Ford, across the river from Runnells in Warren County, also a coal mining town, was laid out by the Burlington Railroad. Ford had a grain elevator and a stockyard near the depot. Its famous, handsome iron bridge built across the Des Moines River in 1902 gave it access to Runnells. Its post office was closed in 1914. Nothing remains of Ford today (or the bridge).

(3) **Des Moines Area**

During the last quarter of the 19th century, coal mining was carried on within the corporate limits of Des Moines. In 1873, Wesley Redhead organized the Des Moines Coal Company and dug a shaft in South Park near the Seventh Street bridge. It became one of the largest coal producers in central Iowa and in 1876 provided jobs for 150 people. When coal deposits within the city were exhausted, a search for new deposits resulted in the discovery and exploitation of coal south of the city.

Sevastopol, just south of the Racoon and Des Moines Rivers, was laid out in 1862 and incorporated as a town in 1878. It was a busy coal mining site and was also known for its brewery and its soap and candle factory. It was the end station for a Des Moines street-car line. It had a post office from 1880 until 1889, when it was incorporated into the growing city of Des Moines.

Carbondale was a mining community located about three miles southeast of Des Moines, made up chiefly of Swedish people. The first mine was sunk in 1889. Carbondale was a company mining camp rather than a true town. The coal company built 175 identical four-room homes on the hillsides and rented them to the miners for \$8 a month. The homes were never painted. The company built a boarding house for single men, charging them \$4 a month for room, board, and laundry. A company store was provided, the only place for the miners to do their shopping.

Three other mines were later opened in the Carbondale area, the last of which was closed in 1908. The houses were sold, the company store closed, and no evidence of the camp remains.

(4) **Madrid Area**

For 18 years, the railroads bypassed **Madrid**, and residents feared it would become a ghost town. Finally in the early 1880's, they received the joyful news that the Milwaukee Railroad planned to lay an east-west line through Madrid, and about the same time they learned that the Des Moines to Boone Railroad would be routed through Madrid, thus providing them with a north-south line. They say in Madrid that "the railroads came just in time to save their flagging economy."

Fortunately for Madrid, there were good coal deposits in the area. Coal companies feverishly obtained coal lands or bought the mineral rights to the land and began mining, even under the streets and alleys of southeast Madrid.

Madrid people found work in the mines and the railroads brought in additional miners, immigrants from Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, and Germany, as well as black workers from the South. From being an almost purely Swedish community, the ethnic composition of Madrid became quite a mixture of peoples.

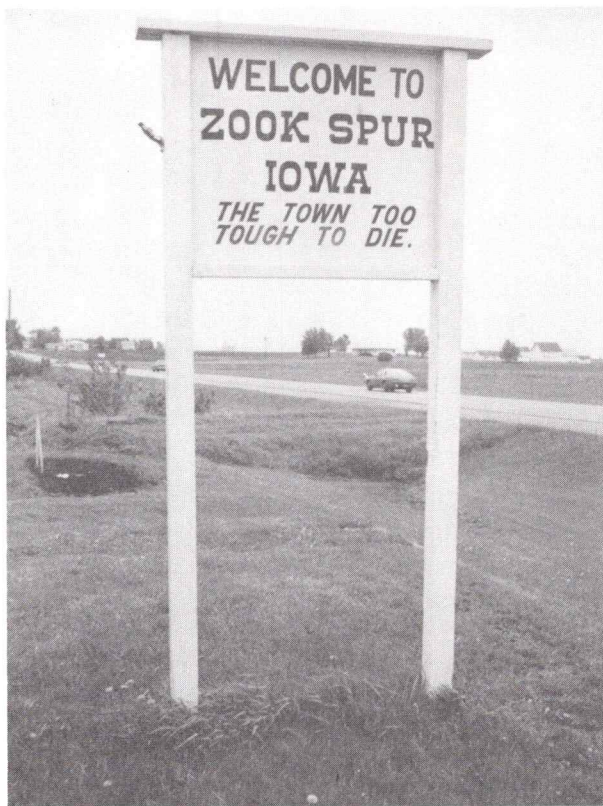
Thousands of tons of coal were shipped to points east. Coal was, indeed, a welcome supplementary source of income, especially during the depression years of the '30's when farmers were in deep financial trouble.

Coal camps, **Scandia**, **Zook Spur**, **Phildia**, and **High Bridge**, the latter named for the Milwaukee bridge which spanned the Des Moines River (said to be the largest and highest double-tracked bridge in the world) drastically changed the appearance of the countryside. Scandia had 1,000 people. Zook Spur, two miles south of Madrid on Highway 17, was once a camp of 500 people; today it has a population of 21. A large painted sign reads, "Zook Spur, the Town too Tough to Die."

The mines around Madrid lasted longer than most; they closed in the 1940's when strikes plagued the plants. Basically, they closed because the railroad had given way to the automobile and coal was no longer needed. Some of the camp houses may still be seen in Madrid or in the surrounding countryside, where they have been moved and remodeled for modern living.

(5) **Boone-Fraser Area**

Though established later than many of the Greenbelt towns (Boone was platted in 1865), **Boone**, as a county seat and rail-



Site of former coal mining camp 2 miles south of Madrid.
(Heusinkveld)



Former coal camp houses in Madrid area, remodeled for modern living. (Heusinkveld)

road town, had grown rapidly and become prosperous. In 1870, it had 2,500 people. It served the needs of the fertile agricultural area which surrounded it. For example, the J.M. Doud Meat Packing Company processed hogs and cattle; Carl Carlson operated a flour mill. (John Doud and Elivera Carlson, daughter of Carl Carlson, were the parents of Mamie Doud Eisenhower). Saddles and harness, carriages, agricultural implements, and many other consumer and agricultural implements were made in Boone and advertised in the Boone newspapers.



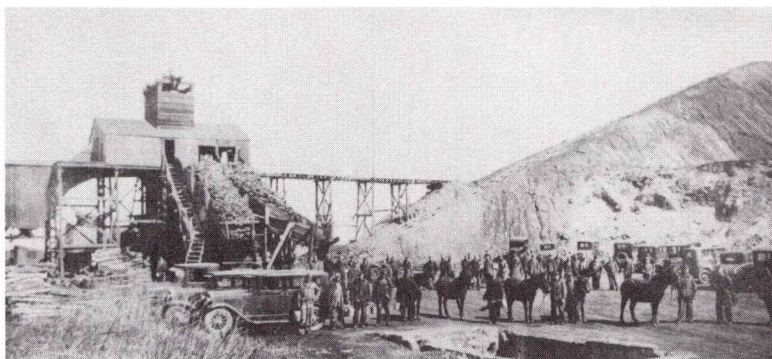
The home where Mamie Doud Eisenhower was born in 1896. (Larry Adams)

It was the decision of the Chicago and North Western Railroad to make Boone their division headquarters which provided the extra boost to insure Boone's economic health. According to Andreas' Historical Atlas of Iowa, 1875 (p. 392):

Boone is at the end of the eastern and western division of the Chicago and North Western Railroad, which company erected extensive improvements consisting of a large roundhouse; machine, engine, and blacksmith shops; and a large freight house, which contains the telegraphy and division offices of the company.

The railroad employed a substantial portion of Boone's work force—1,000 men in 1892. It has constituted a very important factor in Boone's economic development ever since.

The railroad made it possible to exploit the immense deposits of bituminous coal, which had long been known to be present in the river banks, not only at Boone but also at Moingona and the now extinct towns of **Incline** and **Coal Valley**. More than 21 million tons of coal were mined in the years from 1880 until World War II and shipped out by railroad. In 1890, Boone had a population of 6,500.



Benson Coal Mine, north of Boone, early 1920s. (Larry Adams)

The huge red slag heaps of the old Grove Mine just north of Boone are a reminder of the great amounts of coal once taken from the area. Boone is no longer shipping out coal; ironically, a number of coal trains carrying coal from Colorado now travel through Boone each day on their way to Eastern markets.

Fraser, about eight miles north of Boone on the Des Moines River, is exotic in its beauty, with deep ravines and hollows, steep hills which are very slippery when wet, and thick forests along the banks. It is not a likely site for a town, but man was willing to undergo any difficulties in his quest for coal.

In the 1880's, covered wagons on their way westward passed through the area. Some of the land seekers, perhaps out of sheer exhaustion and inability to cope with yet another hurdle, that of getting across the river with its steep banks, stopped and laid claim to the river bottomlands.

Interesting stories are told by early settlers who recall that it was indeed a rough place. Horse thieves and cattle rustlers who hid their stolen animals in caves in the hills, moonshiners who sequestered their stills in the forested hills and hollows, U.S. marshalls who sought the outlaws, and robbers who murdered settlers passing through and took their possessions were a terror to the law-abiding citizens.

However, because of its coal deposits, the area was to change suddenly and drastically. The September 13, 1893, issue of the Boone Republican carried this terse news item,

Boone County is to have a new town on the east side of the Des Moines River in section 35, Dodge Township, right in the bold bend which the river makes at that place. Fraser will be its name. The company (Boone Valley Coal Company) plans to build about 50 houses and a bank, along with stores and an office building. The post office will receive mail daily (see Figure 17).

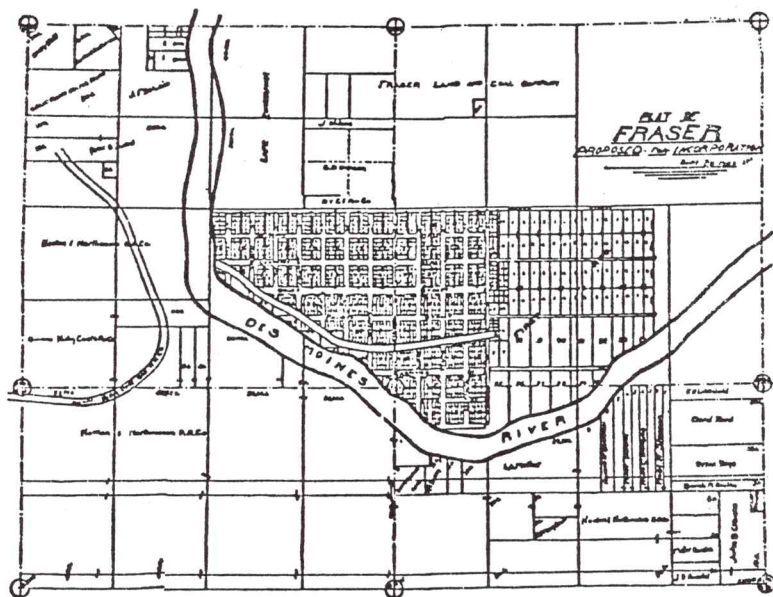


Figure 17—Plat of Fraser, Iowa, 1893.
(Boone County Historical Society)

The Company bought land on both sides of the Des Moines River and built a three-mile stretch of railroad to connect with the Minneapolis and St. Louis line at a place they called Fraser Junction. The cost of building the railroad was exorbitant because of the fearful 200-foot high hills and deep ravines, each necessitating a bridge or trestle. The most difficult engineering feat was building the so-called High Bridge, a wooden bridge 157 feet high and 784 feet long. The costs were so great that the company ran into financial difficulties and the railroad passed into other hands. Its successor (in 1909) was the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern Railroad, which became the largest in the state.

Many people were employed in the feverish building activities that followed. Forests were cut down at a mighty rate and a sawmill built; men, teams, and wagons were hired to produce the lumber for making railroad ties and mine props and walls for the mines, as well as homes for miners who continued to swell the population of Fraser. Hilltops and hollows were solid with miners' homes as far as the eye could see.



Nature is reclaiming her own at the fine old Fraser Mercantile Store.
(Heusinkveld)

Immigrants from Russia, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Bohemia, Ireland, and Wales, and Negroes from the South came to work in the mines. A school was built but soon had to be enlarged. Communication was difficult because of the many languages spoken. Misunderstandings in school led to fights among the children of different ethnic and racial groups.

The hotels were always full and meals were served all day long and until late at night. The Fraser Mercantile and other stores were always busy, as were the eleven saloons. Drunken brawls were common and on pay days, the city jailer was a busy man. Dr. Schaeffer was the family practitioner, and he could also pull teeth, fit eyeglasses, and tend to sick horses.

The majority of the families were law abiding, church-going people. They joined for picnics on July 4 and Labor Day. A huge hall built by the United Mine Workers of America was used as well for school commencements and big dances and entertainments.



Miners' Hall, Fraser (Heusinkveld)

The hilliness of the town presented problems. Little children were fearful of climbing the hills to school, especially when they were wet or icy. Carrying wood and groceries and water up the hills to the homes was a laborious task.

The grade at Fraser Hill (all the hills had names) was so steep that more than once, runaway trains occurred because the brakes could not hold the train on its downhill path. Once a careening train derailed and demolished the depot. The crew managed to scramble to safety. Going up the hill with a load of coal took all the power the engines could muster, and crewmen only hoped the train would not plunge backward and downward.

The river banks, in addition to coal, had good sand and gravel deposits. For a time, 50 men were employed in the manufacture of tile and cement, an additional source of income for Fraser.

Fortune smiled on Fraser in 1906 when the railroad company built a dam on the river and constructed an electrical power plant. The plant operated three shifts a day to supply the electricity needed for the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern Interurban Line. It also sold electricity to surrounding towns



Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern Station, Boone. Buses were also owned by the railroad. (Larry Adams)

in a radius of 20-30 miles. Farmers of the area received electricity at least 20 years before other rural areas did.

The electric train provided commuter service (as well as carried freight) between Fort Dodge and Des Moines. The train ran every 2 hours during the day and would stop at any section line to pick up or let off passengers. Extra cars were added at State Fair time and in the fall when college students were returning to school. The train was beautifully furnished with mahogany and leather upholstery, and it provided elegant dining service. Fraser felt proud of the part it played in supplying the electricity for this wonderful train (see Figure 18).

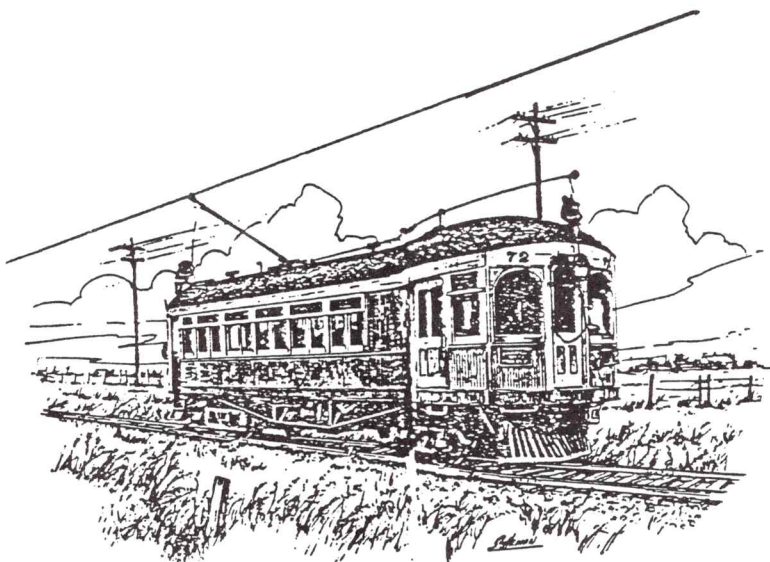


Figure 18—Iowa's Most Popular Interurban,
The Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern.
(Boone County Historical Society)

The peak of the boom in Fraser lasted from 1893 until 1912, when the population numbered about 2,000. Then available coal supplies began to dwindle, and miners moved to other places. June 21, 1954, was a fateful day for Fraser. A disastrous flood swept down the Des Moines River and submerged the power plant, despite heroic attempts to save it. Five months later, the plant was back in operation, and Interurban service restored,

but the days of the passenger train were over (this train lasted much longer than others), and the automobile had taken its place. On August 31, 1955, the train made its last run, and the power plant was abandoned.

The power station whistles which through the years had announced the time of day at 7 a.m., noon, and 3:30 p.m., (time for school dismissal), were never to be heard again. One by one businesses, the school, and homes were moved or fell into decay. The ruins of a handsome store, the miners' hall, and the old jail still stand. Nature is quietly claiming her own, as trees and weeds grow out of the old buildings.

The primitive Methodist Church, a few homes and a population of 130 remain today (1988). The new Damn Site Trading Post sells bait and lunches to the visitors who come to fish and enjoy the wild beauty of Fraser.

(6) **The Lehigh Area**

Starting as a little mill town called Tyson's Mill, **Lehigh**, in Webster County, in time became one of the largest coal producers in Iowa as well as a producer of bricks and tiles second to none. Lehigh, named after the Lehigh Coal Valley, in Pennsylvania, from which a number of its miners came, is most appropriately named.

Coal mining, in its early stages in 1858, was slow and primitive. In 1864, John Sturdevant, was digging coal from the banks of the Des Moines and carrying it out in bushel baskets. Oliver Tyson, the sawmill operator, also opened a mine. Others dug coal and hauled it by horse and wagon to the Illinois Central railroad station in nearby Duncombe.

In 1876, Webster City entrepreneur, Mr. W.C. Willson, built an eight-mile spur from the Illinois Central Railroad south to Lehigh, founded the Crooked Creek Coal Company, and began large scale coal mining in the Lehigh area.

By 1880, 600 men were employed in shallow mines and in deep shaft mines of the room and pillar type. In 1886, the Chicago and Great Western laid a line from Mason City to Lehigh. The portion of the line between Fort Dodge and Lehigh carried more tonnage than any other line in Iowa. In 1902, Lehigh shipped out 515 tons of coal each day. Coal continued to be Lehigh's main industry for many years as other companies came in, and new rich coal deposits were being discovered.

Mining had brought great wealth to Lehigh, but many of the immigrant workers were poorly paid. The stooped position they had to sustain for long days was back breaking; the work was dirty and dangerous. Cave-ins and explosions took a number of lives. Escaping carbonic gases caused frequent illness. The situation was ripe for the United Mine Workers to organize the men. As a result of periodic strikes, the workers did obtain better hours and wages. But the mines were already closing. The last big shaft mine, opened in 1921, was closed in 1923. Small mines continued to operate until 1946.

Railroads abandoned their lines and even picked up the tracks—the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern (which had absorbed the Crooked Creek Railroad) in 1932 and the Chicago Great Western in 1962. Ironically, Lehigh had waited a long time for a promised electric Interurban to be operated on the old Crooked Creek rails and then continuing on to Webster City and Fort Dodge. Amid great exultation, it finally came into being in 1917, only to be abandoned in 1928 for lack of customers; people were by then driving their own automobiles.

Fortunately, Lehigh had superior clays for making bricks and tiles. In the 1890s, Lehigh was already making great quantities of attractive, high-quality bricks which were sold throughout the country. In 1893, Lehigh bricks won first prize at the World's Fair in Chicago.

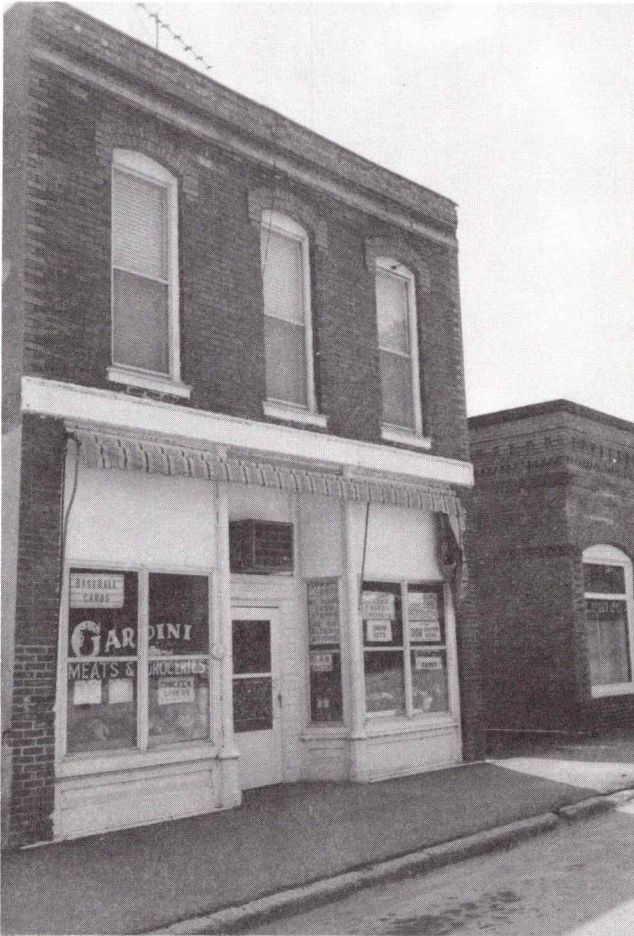
Making clay tiles for drainage ditches was an extremely lucrative business for Lehigh. Because of the many sloughs being drained in Webster, Hamilton, Boone, and other counties, Lehigh tiles enjoyed an almost insatiable market. Workers came from Dayton, Stratford, and Burnside to work in the Lehigh Sewer Pipe and Tile plant.

Eventually, however, the drainage projects were completed, and that market all but lost. Fortunately, at about the same time, a marked increase in the use of indoor bathrooms, even in the rural areas, created a new market for sewer pipe. That market, however, later declined as plastic sewer pipes, considered superior to the tile pipes, were introduced.

In 1975, the tile factories still had 103 employees, many of them third generation workers. Since that time various internal difficulties and changes in ownership have threatened the life of the industry. Because of their superior product, however, it is likely that the business will continue, though perhaps on

a somewhat smaller scale. New products include flues for fireplaces and copings for brick buildings.

Lehigh's population has fallen from a high of 1,800 to less than half that number. It is still an attractive town with a spectacular view of the river, and it maintains a tenacious determined spirit and an air of permanence so that hopefully the town may discover a new source of livelihood. The annual River Days festival celebrated in July reminds them of Lehigh's great past, but also looks to a new future, hopefully in tourism.



Gardini's Grocery (which sells everything), Lehigh. Old family-owned store reminiscent of past days, it is well-known and popular throughout the area. (Heusinkveld)

Kalo and **Coalville** were two thriving but ephemeral coal towns north of Lehigh. **Hardscrabble** was a fabulous little town in nearby Hungry Hollow Valley that grew and died along with the fortunes of coal.

(7) **Fort Dodge**

Fort Dodge prospered, grew and became the economic center of a region extending around it in a radius of 75 to 100 miles. The railroad-coal era was a good time for Fort Dodge.

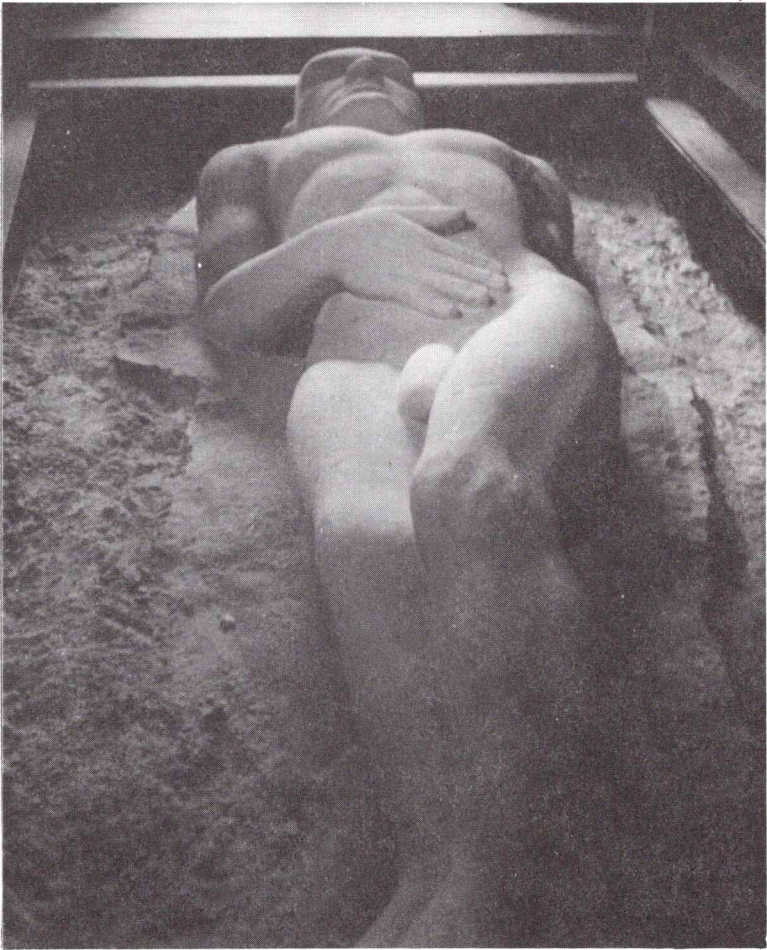
Mining was of great significance in Fort Dodge's growth. Coal was mined south of Fort Dodge in the Coalville and Kalo areas. Their excellent clay deposits were used in making superior quality bricks. Even more important and unique were its gypsum deposits laid down by the ancient Jurassic seas. Fort Dodge gypsum was said to be the most abundant, most easily mined, and of the best quality in the country.

Gypsum could be used to make wallboard, or pulverized and calcined to be used as plaster of paris, or cut into building stones. Fine mansions and public buildings in Fort Dodge and surrounding towns were built of gypsum blocks.

Fort Dodge's gypsum came to the attention of the nation with the Cardiff Giant hoax in 1869, when a couple of enterprising young men arranged to have a large slab of gypsum quarried at Fort Dodge, rough chiseled it into the form of a ten-foot man, put it in a coffin-like box and shipped it by railroad from Boone to Syracuse, New York. They buried it, and three years later "discovered" it on their farm while digging for a well. It was a phenomenon believed even by scientists to be a petrified prehistoric man. Tourists from all over the world came to see it. Though it was later proved to be a hoax, the nation had learned about Fort Dodge gypsum! It has through the years been a great boon to their economy.

Furthermore, Fort Dodge is in the center of Iowa's most fertile agricultural area, whose western reaches were just being settled in the 1870's. The farmers of the area needed processing and distributing facilities for their corn, hogs, and cattle. They needed machinery for their farms. Fort Dodge became their supply center as well as their railroad shipping center once the Illinois Central Railroad came through in 1869.

Flour mills and meat packing plants, Quaker Oats, and farm machinery plants served the farmers' needs. Large new hotels and department stores catered to the shoppers of the area. Many came on the electric interurban of the Fort Dodge, Des



Replica of the Cardiff Giant, Fort Museum, Fort Dodge (Myron Heusinkveld)

Moines, and Southern Railway, which ran every two hours on its route between Des Moines, Boone, and Fort Dodge.

Fort Dodge, economic center of a rich agricultural area, endowed with rich deposits of coal, clay, and gypsum, and accessible by railroads, had by the twentieth century developed into a city with fine homes and churches, cultural centers, and beautiful parks.

Summary

The railroad, the greatest single development of the

1865-1920s period, permeated every aspect of the economy and of personal life. The new technology of the railroad, together with coal, an inanimate source of power, enabled man to produce much more than he had been able to do with the horse.

Farmers now had better corn planters and cultivators and other machinery, but it was still man and the horse, who were doing the work. It took a lot of manpower (or family power) to run the farms. However, once farmers had the railroad to help market their products and to transport machinery and other necessities to their farms, they could live a much less self-sufficient, more productive life. The "home-made" gave way to the "store-bought."

Local transport to the store for groceries, to church, and to school still depended on the horse. The small farm-oriented town, continued to be the hub of social life and activity.

Des Moines assumed a new role with respect to the area. Wholesaling institutions on Court Avenue and down to the railroad tracks brought in store buyers from the little towns. The big retail stores also served to draw people from all the Greenbelt towns into Des Moines' orbit.

Coal mining challenged agriculture as a source of employment and of income. Coal, together with the railroad, spawned new towns, Swan, Runnells, Harvey, and Fraser—each the epitome of coal mining, railroading, and river town. It infused towns such as Lehigh and Madrid with new life. Swashbuckling mining camps were born and died during this period. Coal mining changed the ethnic character of the population, notably in those communities where one ethnic group had predominated.

Finally, however, coal had to give way to competitive fuels for home heating, and with its symbiotic partner, the "Iron Horse," yielded to the "Horseless Carriage", the gasoline-powered automobile, (The use of these terms indicated the continuing large place of the horse in people's minds).

The exciting 60-year railroad-coal era was on its way out in the 1920s, having produced dramatic and irreversible economic and social changes in the Greenbelt.

Chapter 8

The Super-Highway, The Supermarket, And Other Super-Sized Institutions

1920s-1980s

In 1905, there were only 709 automobiles in all of Iowa; they were something of a rich gentleman's toy (to be stored during the winter) rather than a practical mode of transportation. Ten years later, 1915, there were 147,078, and Iowa ranked first in the nation in ratio of automobiles to total population; by 1925, Iowa had 659,202 automobiles.

In Des Moines, shops on "Auto Row" on Locust Street displayed new cars and maintained repair shops. Several automobiles were manufactured in Des Moines, though briefly,—the Mason, The Des Moines, the Monarch, the Wells, and the Cannon. Henry Ford established a Ford Assembly plant at 18th and Grand which operated from 1920 to 1932. The Automobile Era had begun with great enthusiasm in Iowa and was to bring unforeseen changes in town and country-side.

Originally, the state governments exercised no administrative control over the roads; county supervisors had the authority to determine road location, and township trustees determined the property taxes to levy for the roads in their domain. Farmers could opt to pay the tax in labor, and it was they who graded and dragged the first roads and then kept them in repair.

The roads were given names instead of numbers. The Lincoln Highway, the predecessor of U.S. Highway 30, was the "grand-daddy" of them all. It was the first marked and paved highway to extend from coast to coast across the country. It passes the south edge of Boone. The Daniel Boone Trail is the present U.S. Highway 169 through Boone County; the Hawkeye Trail is now U.S. Highway 20 through Webster City and Fort Dodge; the Great White Way is now State Highway 163, the road from Oskaloosa through Pella to Des Moines; the Vandalia Road is now County Road F70 between Runnells and Des Moines.

The Automobile, Agent Of Change In Agriculture

The farmer chugged to his market town in his Model T; he trucked his produce to the processing plants; he started using

tractors in his fields. Old Dobbin, who had pulled so many loads of grain, so many heavy tiles for draining the land, and rails and timbers for the mines, was no longer needed.

The horse's disappearance caused a major revolution in farming patterns. No longer did the farmer need to grow oats for the horses. He could specialize instead in corn and soybeans, more profitable crops. No longer was horse manure produced. The farmer turned to chemical fertilizers, (as well as chemical herbicides), and, in many instances, he polluted the wells and even the streams.

With the demise of the horse, the towns changed, too. Blacksmith shops, livery stables, hitching posts were no longer needed. The small town hotel all but vanished. Garages, filling stations, parking meters, and motels took their place.

The towns performed new functions for the farmers—they mixed feeds, serviced machinery, and sold chemical fertilizers and herbicides and improved seeds. Johnston (see below) is an example of the new role of the towns in the Automobile Era.

Johnston which had been an unincorporated village with about 25 houses since its beginnings as a railroad station in 1905, entered a period of considerable change in 1926 when the Pioneer Seed Company was organized and established in Johnston. The Company not only owned corn fields but a large amount of land used for beef cattle as well. Pioneer was the mainstay of the town.

In 1969, a group of community spirited citizens was successful in getting their town incorporated. Because of Johnston's proximity to Des Moines, there was a large market for new housing. In the mid-1970s Pioneer decided to abandon their beef operations, and they sold the land they no longer needed to building developers who constructed a number of apartment houses. Johnston's appearance was transformed.

Johnston today is in a state of flux, retaining some of its longtime rural characteristics, not only in Pioneer Seeds, still its chief employer, but also in zoning part of the town as agricultural and allowing residents to have barns and horses and cattle on their small acreages. It also has four nurseries. It is the headquarters for the Men's Garden Club of America.

On the other hand, Johnston is fast becoming an important urban center—the new building for Iowa Educational TV, Channel 11, is located in Johnston as well as that of the Area 11

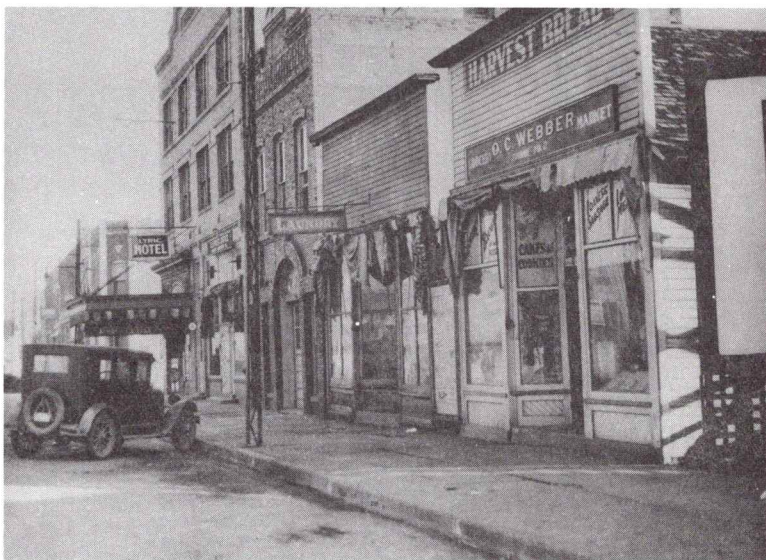
Educational Agency, which serves seven counties. Its Green Meadows area is a planned community with a combination of commercial offices, a village square, retail area, and various types of housing units. Its 30-square mile school district extends to Jester Park and into Urbandale and Des Moines.

Johnston's 1980 population was 2,600; its 1988 population is estimated at 4,200. It is one of the fastest growing cities in Iowa. It is increasingly becoming a commuter center for Des Moines as well as a residential center for the officers of nearby Camp Dodge. The Saylorville Recreation area, located partly in the corporate area of Johnston, contributes to this growth. The traffic on Merle Hay Road past Johnston on the way to Saylorville Lake is clogged with traffic on summer weekends.

Impact Of The Great Depression

World War I was a time of prosperity for farmers because of the European demand for their grain and meat. After the war, however, farm prices and consequently land prices plummeted, leading finally to the Depression of the 30's.

Almost every bank closed, and money was scarce. The farmer was reduced to conditions similar to those of the pioneer days when he had to produce all his needs from his own land. Yet,



Valley Junction in the 1930s. (Des Moines Register)

he was more fortunate than the town dweller, who had a hard time finding money to buy his food.

Farm foreclosures, often accompanied by violence, were frequent. A number of farmers had to leave their farms. The land was purchased at ridiculously low prices by those who had savings; the insidious trend towards large landholdings had begun.

An ex-farmer from Fraser tells of the necessity of working for the W.P.A. in building the Y.M.C.A. camp near Boone; though the wages were small, they kept the family from starving. Meanwhile, his children were peddling hominy and other food products in Boone.

Looking back, the farmers say that the Depression had its bright side, too. It brought families together in the struggle to keep alive. It knit communities together as well. A former Red Rock woman tells that since people could not afford the gasoline to drive their cars to their churches in other towns, residents worshipped together—Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Latter Day Saints—in the Methodist Church in Red Rock.

Fort Dodge, closely tied to the agricultural economy, was one of the cities hard hit by the Depression. One out of eight was on relief. The city lost three large employers—Quaker Oats, a shoe factory, and a telephone company. The building industry was so slow that the gypsum plants had to lay off a number of workers. Some relief came in 1934 when Tobin Packing Plant came in and hired 400 employees.

People who couldn't find work became hoboes, trudging around the countryside, carrying their knapsacks, sleeping in barns or rural schoolhouses, asking for handouts at the farmhouses. Others hopped the boxcars of freight trains to look elsewhere for a livelihood. They were memorialized in "The Ballad of the Wabash Cannonball":

Now listen to her rumble, now listen to her roar,
As she echoes down the valley and tears along the
shore.

Now hear the engine's whistle and her mighty hoboes
call

As they ride the rods and brakebeams of the Wabash
Cannonball.

The sufferings of the Depression left a more indelible impression on people's minds than perhaps any other event in our history.

World War II led to economic recovery. Following the war, farm prices remained high. Land prices soared. An unprecedented era of farm prosperity characterized the 1950's and 1960's. The farmer was finally able to build a modern farm home, buy more land, acquire expensive machinery, take vacations, drive a new car, and send his children to high school and college. A look of prosperity on the farms replaced the run-down appearance of depression times.

The recession of the 1980's, though mild as compared with that of the '30's, led again to farm foreclosures, bank closings, and again the acquisition of large landholdings, often by banks and corporations.

Farm Consolidation

The 160-acre "family farm," was no longer economically feasible. The purchase of mammoth tractors and other farm machinery necessitated larger holdings in order to amortize the costs incurred. In 1980, farms in Greenbelt counties north of Des Moines—Boone, Webster, and Hamilton—averaged 256 acres, whereas those south of Des Moines—Polk, Warren, and Marion—averaged 211 acres. (U.S. County and City Data Book, 1983).

As farms were absorbed into larger holdings and farmers moved off their land, their houses and barns deteriorated and stood like empty haunted buildings, or they were demolished. Old timers feel sorrowful at seeing their cherished farm communities thus disintegrating.

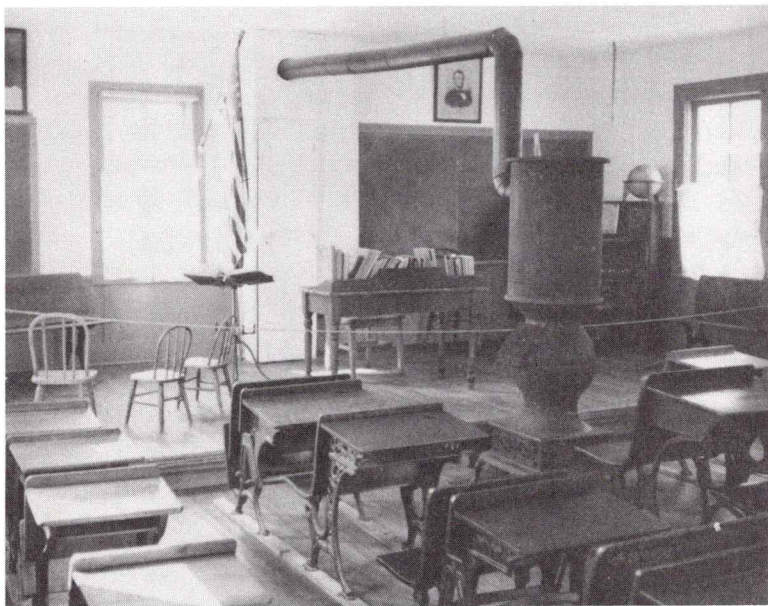
Small Towns Dwindle

As farmers moved into the cities to seek employment, their small town service centers languished. As a result, small towners likewise had to find work in perhaps Des Moines or Fort Dodge. They found that the cities offered greater attractions in the way of shopping, entertainment, and medical services. As they took advantage of the city's greater offerings, they contributed to the further decline of their home town businesses.

In almost every small town, one sees empty store buildings, though the residential section may present a better appearance. Its residents are commuters to Des Moines, Fort Dodge, or other cities.

School Consolidation

Other casualties of the automobile era were the rural elementary schools, originally spaced at two-mile intervals, and the small village schoolhouses. The first consolidation, which took place in the '40s, eliminated the rural schools by providing that all children be bused to the nearest town for their elementary education. In the 1960s, schools with small enrollments consolidated with other small schools to form larger schools. Children from Swan went to Pleasantville; Red Rock and Harvey children went to Knoxville; and Runnells children were bused to Southeast Polk. The Central Webster School at Burnside absorbed the schools at Lehigh and Harcourt, as well as the Dayton High School. North Polk at Polk City includes Sheldahl, Elkhart, and Alleman. As of the fall of 1987, Stratford children were bused into Webster City.



Border Plains School, Webster County, in use 1857-1969, Fort Museum, Fort Dodge (Heusinkveld)

In 1988, further consolidation, in the form of county-sized school districts was being discussed. A result of consolidation is that towns lose employment and business, and community ties are weakened.

Small Towns Struggle to Survive—Stratford an Example

Stratford with a little under 1,000 population, has not lost population, in fact, has gained a little in the last census period. Service groups and a Stratford Community Betterment Committee have made determined efforts to maintain and improve the quality of life for all age groups so as to encourage their people to live in Stratford, even though they may work in Webster City, Fort Dodge, or Ames. They have built tennis courts, a library, apartments, a senior citizen congregate meal center, and beautified and improved their park.

New businesses in Stratford in the 1980's decade include Gustafson Glass which handicrafts glass window decorations and is making church windows to sell throughout the country. The company employs 35 or more people. TeleMarketing provides for national telephone advertising and hires about 25 people. The Care Center, a new nursing home which is licensed for 70 residents, hires 55 employees.

Agric-Education, Inc., started in 1970 by a Stratford agriculture teacher-farmer, Keith Carlson, develops workbooks and computer programs in agriculture which are used nationwide by secondary and university teachers. The company's business address, 185 Shakespeare, Stratford, Iowa, shows something of the delightful mix of the poetic and the practical which is Stratford.

Stratford community leaders are aggressively working to increase tourism by producing pageants and festivals and information for tourists as to scenic and historic resources—Boone Forks, Indian Mounds, mill towns, old Hook's Point, and others. They are seeking to have their whole area placed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are working with the Midas Council of Governments to effect desirable changes for the future. A bed and breakfast place in a charming farmhouse in old Hook's Point opened in May, 1987.

Today, as small towns are threatened with extinction, they must be resilient, imaginative, and resourceful in order to stem the tide—to maintain, perhaps in a new way, the form and essence of their communities.

Tourism, which is said to be Iowa's third greatest source of income in 1987, is also being promoted by other towns, such as Dayton, which sponsors an annual Labor Day Rodeo, Lehigh, which celebrates River Days in July, Webster City, with its Boone

Bash River Dash (canoeing events) in May, and Boone with Pufferbilly days in September. These festivals are not only a way of preserving a community's history and heritage, but they also promote its economy.

The Greenbelt's Four Largest Cities in the 1980s

Boone's (1980 population 12,600) diversified economic base is indicated by its agricultural-related industries such as De Kalb Agricultural Research (seed corn); heavier industries such as foundry and machine shops; and lighter consumer industries such as bakeries and its Private Stock Winery; educational activities such as the Boone Campus of the Des Moines Area Community College; and a growing tourism emphasis.

Boone seems to have stopped growing (1970 Population 12,468), but every effort is being made to make it an attractive and pleasant place to live. The city has an unusual number of beautiful parks. Its downtown has been renovated to beautify it and preserve something of its historical past as for example in the renovation of an old deteriorating building to produce The Livery, a complex of restaurants and offices.

Boone continues to be important as a railroad center, and the railroad employs a substantial portion of the town's work force. The North Western Railroad, which had designated Boone as a division headquarters already in 1875, enlarged its facilities in Boone in 1987. The Des Moines Register, May 10, 1987, reported that:

Some high tech railroading equipment will be on display May 17th when the North Western Railroad dedicates its new \$3 million Central Division Headquarters at Boone. The headquarters which will include a new computerized dispatch office, serves all railroad's operations in Iowa and in parts of Missouri and Nebraska. More than 2,000 persons are employed in the Central Division.

In the 1980s The Chicago and North Western Railroad (successor of the Fort Dodge, Des Moines, and Southern Railroad) notified Boone of their decision to abandon the eleven miles of track between Fraser and Boone (the route of its once popular electrified Interurban). The Boone Railroad Historical Society, desperately wanting to save it, managed to raise the \$50,000 asking price, and in addition bought an engine and

coaches, and in October 1983, opened the Boone Valley and Scenic Railroad as a tourist attraction. In 1987, the line was extended to Fraser. In its first year of operation 47,000 people came to Boone to ride the train on the Scenic Line. Pufferbilly Days in early September is an annual celebration of the role of the railroad.

Boone has also enhanced its tourist attractions by restoring the birthplace of Mamie Doud (Eisenhower) and furnishing it in 1890's style, including some of her family possessions. It was opened to the public in 1980.

The beauty of the Ledges State Park about three miles south of Boone and of many wooded spots along the Des Moines River, and its proximity to the larger population centers of Des Moines and Ames combine to bring a considerable number of tourists to the area. An unusual number of youth and church camps operate in the vicinity, for example, the Episcopal Church camp; the Y.M.C.A. camp, Camp Sacajawea, a Girl Scout camp; O'Briens Camp for Girls, and Camp Hantesa, a Camp Fire Girl's Camp.

Webster City (1980 population, 8,700), county seat of Hamilton County, has a tradition of business entrepreneurship and inventive creativity, resulting in a variety of manufacturing companies. The largest by far, with 1,300 employees, is W.C. Products, which makes washers and dryers. The plant is owned by AB Electrolux Company of Sweden.

This ominous sounding headline appeared in the Des Moines Register, August 9, 1987, "\$95 million plant at stake; Webster City, hopes, waits." The article goes on to say that the Webster City plant has been operating at a loss for the last few years, and a move is contemplated to one of several southern states, which have made incentive offers. Webster City and the State of Iowa made counter incentive offers. After various negotiations, the company decided to remain in Webster City. Needless to say, it would have been almost a mortal blow to Webster City as well as to surrounding communities if they had lost the plant.

Fort Dodge (1980 population 29,423), regional center of a large agricultural area, lost population in the 1980's, (1970 population 31,263), and businesses closed because of the ailing farm economy and the attendant slump in building, hence of sales of gypsum and clay products.

Because of the consolidation of farms, its hinterland has also

lost population, and Fort Dodge has fewer buyers for its goods.

Meat packing was for many years a leading industry in Fort Dodge. Hormel, Iowa Beef, and Gus Glazer processed meat for a large market. Now all of these are gone. A major part of its Felco Land O'Lakes flour plant has moved to Minnesota.

Presently, Fort Dodge is concerned about cutbacks in its air service and so the old problem of transportation facilities reappears. According to the Des Moines Register, May 13, 1987, passenger boardings in Fort Dodge have decreased from 10,000 in 1978 to 5,000 in 1986. In a sense, Fort Dodge is again on the frontier; Des Moines is attracting a greater number of the air flights, to the detriment of Fort Dodge.

On the positive side, the farm situation is apparently improving in the late 1980's. The Fort Dodge Laboratories, which makes animal biological products, is one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies and is expanding. Furthermore, Fort Dodge is still the magnet for the people of its area. Workers from Lehigh, Dayton, and other towns continue to seek work in Fort Dodge. Fort Dodge is the place to see a movie, visit an art gallery, hear a concert, and shop or go to the library or museum, or to attend the newly established (1971) Iowa Central Community College. Fort Dodge is their big city.

Except for Sioux City on Iowa's western boundary, Fort Dodge is vastly larger (it has more than two and a half times the population of the nearest contender) than any other center in the northwest quarter of the State.

The Des Moines Metropolitan Area (1980 population, 191,000; metro population, 250,000) includes West Des Moines (the former Valley Junction) with a 1980 population of 22,000; Urbandale population, 14,839; Windsor Heights; Pleasant Hill; Clive; Saylorville; and Johnston. Unlike most Iowa cities, Des Moines has grown during the period 1980-1986, though slowly. West Des Moines and Urbandale and other suburbs have grown much faster than the inner city.

The automobile has made it possible for Des Moines to draw neighboring towns into its orbit. For example, Madrid, 20 miles distant, Carlisle 9 miles, and Runnells 15 miles from Des Moines are among the many small towns whose people drive to work each day to jobs in the State offices, Armstrong and Firestone Tire Companies, John Deere factories, department stores, restaurants, banks, publishing houses, insurance offices,

hospitals, Drake University, and other places.

Meanwhile, these commuter towns are languishing, their movie theatres, newspapers, and businesses closing their doors.

On the other hand, towns near Des Moines which had become ghost towns, Adelphi, Saylorville, and Morgan Valley, for example, are sprouting with new little homes as they are revived as bedroom towns whose residents find them cheaper and less crowded than Des Moines. Des Moines is like a huge spider web drawing outlying areas into its orbit.

The drawing power of Des Moines is illustrated by Greenbelt counties' population trends. Between 1970 and 1980, the counties distant from Des Moines, the fertile agricultural counties—Webster, Hamilton, and Boone—lost population, (as did Iowa as a whole), whereas counties around Des Moines—Dallas, Polk, Warren, Jasper, and Marion—gained population. (1980 Census of Population and Housing, distributed by the Iowa Development Commission). Farming is no longer the sole economic activity in the Greenbelt. Urban economic functions have indeed become important in terms of employment and income.

Des Moines' influence is enhanced by the fact that The Des Moines Register, which goes into almost every home, has an effect on what people know, and think, and through its advertisements entices people into its shopping malls, movies, concerts, and sports events. Des Moines' three national television networks bring Des Moines and its concerns into everybody's living room, so that all Iowans recognize that they are involved with what happens in Des Moines.

A negative effect of the automobile on Des Moines is that the downtown area must constantly fight to maintain its vitality as shopping malls, motels, and hardware and other businesses locate in outlying areas easily accessible by automobile and with more parking space.

Des Moines set about to make downtown so attractive that people would feel drawn to the center. The latter 1970's and the 1980's experienced a building boom comparable to that of the 1920's.

A geodesic domed Botanical Building on the riverfront, the Des Moines Civic Center, beautiful Nollen Plaza, the Kaleidoscope downtown shopping center, a system of skywalks connecting the major commercial districts, a restoration of the Court Avenue old warehouse district for restaurants and night

entertainment, and the new Historical Building (1988) combine to make downtown Des Moines attractive and sophisticated instead of a depressed area.

Des Moines, urban though it may be, still depends on the vicissitudes of crop production and world trade and economic conditions. Its location in a great agricultural belt means that its fortunes will fluctuate with the fortunes of its hinterland. Likewise, the fortunes of the hinterland depend on complex decisions made in Des Moines.

Summary

During the Era of the Automobile, the 1920's to the present, small units have combined to make a few giant ones—the little dirt roads to concrete superhighways, the 160-acre “family farms” to landholdings of hundreds of acres, the rural schools to large schools in the cities, small-town general stores to supermarkets, small businesses and small manufacturing units, to big conglomerates. The super-sized city grows at the expense of smaller towns. The area has become urbanized and industrialized.

The horse and coal have been replaced by new sources of power; technological advances have been almost mind boggling. The land and the river have been changed, by pollution and erosion and depletion of soils and forests, forces unleashed by man in his efforts to tame the land for his use. Social and family structures and patterns of life have been much altered during this period.

Chapter 9

The River Again

"For men may come and men may go, but I go on forever."
—Tennyson

Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake

True, the river still flows through this area, but great have been the changes its people have made upon it. It would have been incomprehensible to the Sac and Fox who once lived here and also to the pioneers that man could change the river into great lakes of water.

Long before the construction of the Red Rock and Saylorville dams, Iowans had changed the river by destroying the vegetation from its banks and plowing and planting the land so that the river became filled with sediments. Mighty floods such as the Indian had never known destroyed life and property and farm land. The two dam and reservoir projects were designed to prevent future flood destruction.

The reservoir and dam projects replaced something else which had been destroyed—the joy of living close to Nature—by creating opportunities similar to those of the “good old days,” now past. Early settlers had a close relationship with Nature as they farmed the land and noted its beauties and were dependent on its bounties as well as its destructive aspects. The new lake projects provided for recreational areas for boating, hiking, swimming, fishing, bicycling, and just looking. People could get away from their city offices and indulge in the pleasures of the great out-of-doors.

Unfortunately, in addition to the financial costs, there were human costs involved in the construction of these projects. They were borne by those who had always lived along the river. Several of these cases will be described in the following pages.

The End of the Village of Red Rock

For years, construction of a dam at Red Rock had been discussed. Action on the matter was precipitated by the particularly destructive 1947 flood. Initial expectations were that the



Red Rock people find refuge in the Methodist Church during the 1947 flood. (Blanche Templeton)

dam would be built just above the historic town of Red Rock, and that it would thus be spared future disaster. However on investigation of the site, the engineers judged that Howell Station, about 10 miles downstream from Red Rock was a far more feasible site. Hearings on the proposed new site were acrimonious, but the decision was that the town of Red Rock must be sacrificed in order to obtain the most efficient flood control for the entire area. One woman expressed the feelings of the community when she wrote in the Pella Chronicle, September 22, 1966, "It was hard to keep back the tears when we learned that our town was doomed."

The farmers were forced to sell their lands and town residents to sell their properties to the Government, following which their homes were torn down or removed. Red Rock's demise was sudden and complete. In 1969, Red Rock Dam was closed, and in a matter of a few days, a great lake covered the former town site. Its sister village, **Cordova**, was also covered by the waters as were the farmlands and former villages of **Fifield** and **Percy**.

Swan the Town that was Cut in Half

Swan was already declining in 1969, as its coal mines had long ceased to operate, and its school had been forced to consolidate

with Pleasantville. But the worst was yet to come. In 1963, the U.S. Government announced that the north part of Swan had been designated as part of the reservoir for the Lake Red Rock project. This included the entire business district, many homes, and fertile farmlands. Residents remember the sad days more than 20 years ago when they saw their homes going up in flames and their gardens bulldozed. The segment of the town that is left has a population of about 75 people, some of whom work in Des Moines or Knoxville. There are no business places or churches in Swan. A "For Sale" sign is posted on the schoolhouse.



The Swan schoolhouse is for sale. (Heusinkveld)

Runnells, a Bedroom Town

Blocks of well-kept homes and fine churches, but no stores and virtually no daytime traffic give a sense of incongruity to Runnells. It had presented quite a different appearance until 1963, when the Government bought the flood plain area around the depot, which included 61 homes, the City Hall, a grain elevator, a lumber yard, and other businesses. Most of the businesses chose to close rather than to relocate.

The railroad had to move its tracks above the flood plain and build a new depot. The new depot, however, has never been occupied; the trains do not stop at Runnells. Population has dropped to about 350 people from a one-time high of 1,400. Its people drive to Des Moines to work; its high school children are bused to Southeast Polk School.

Adelphi

This once delightful town was almost a ghost town by the time the Government bought its remaining buildings. Today, Adelphi has a new life, a little farther back from the river than before. Proximity to Des Moines has encouraged commuters to build homes and an attractive new Baptist Church.

Carlisle

Carlisle was less affected by the creation of Lake Red Rock. A small island east of Carlisle on a tract of bottomland between the Des Moines and Middle Rivers was in the path of the project, and several fine old farm homes on this island had to be removed.

The Des Moines Riverfront

Though the lake projects had inundated some towns, there were others for whom the projects were beneficial.

With the completion of the Saylorville Dam and Reservoir in 1977, the Des Moines Riverfront was spared future flood damage such as had occurred many times before, the most recent being in 1947 and 1954. However, the riverfront was unsightly with shabby old wholesale houses and vacant railroad shacks. The center of the Des Moines building district had moved northward following the decline of the railroads.

Beautification of the riverfront, the creation of "Des Moines, the city beautiful," had been an important Des Moines priority for many years. In fact it was one of the first cities in the U.S. to plan a city development program that took advantage of its natural setting on the river. Beautification of the riverfront was also an important priority in Greenbelt planning. The Corps of Engineers built levees, stabilized the banks, and restored bridges. A river bank promenade and a riverfront plaza will be part of the continuing work on this historically and culturally rich riverfront area.

Polk City Transformed into a Tourist Services Town

When the Saylorville dam and lake were constructed, a smaller dam was built across Big Creek and its waters diverted to the Des Moines River, so that when the Saylorville Lake was filled, it would not back up and inundate Polk City. Polk City, now tucked between two lakes, Saylorville and Big Creek Lakes,

has no place to expand, and furthermore has hardly enough taxable land left (some of its land was confiscated) to support its public services, as, for example, its fire station.

Polk City businesses had been declining as people were driving to Des Moines to do their shopping. Fortunately, new businesses opened after the building of the dam, with a new type of clientele. They cater to campground vacationers. Its Casey store is said to sell more pop, pizzas, beer, ice, and other products on weekends than any other Casey store in Iowa. Bait and tackle shops, a laundromat, a tanning salon, and a beauty shop serve this clientele.

On weekends, Highway 415 which winds through the town is so crowded as to constitute a problem to residents. Some say, however, that it's a type of problem they like, as tourists bring business.

Madrid

This is what Madrid residents, Glenn Allen and Patricia Cronk, say in the Madrid Centennial Book concerning the effects of the Saylorville Lake project:

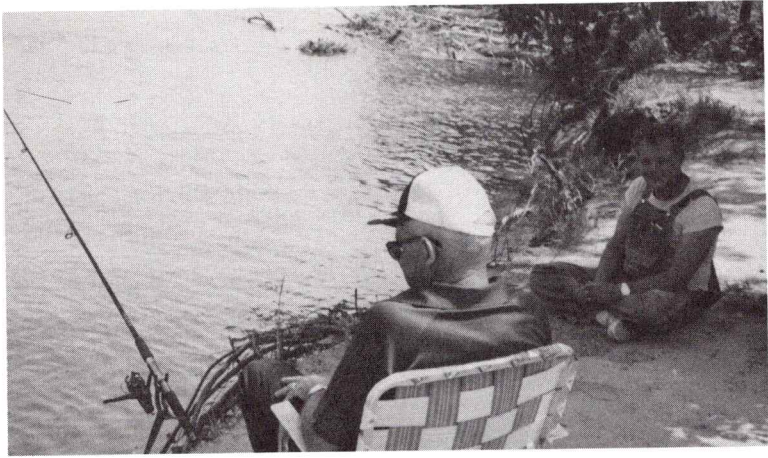
Much of the river land is owned by the Government. Chestnut Ford bridge has been removed, as has the small community of Gibbsville. The bridge spanning the Des Moines River is gone. . . replaced by a new and modern bridge. The double-tracked Milwaukee Railroad bridge was removed by explosives. A new high bridge spans the river to the south, and fishermen may be seen on beautiful Saylorville Lake for miles.

The areas settled by Charles Gaston and the small party of Swedes has now become part of this federal park—a place for recreation rather than a place needing to be tamed. . . Big Creek Lake provides a pleasant place for fishermen, both in summer and winter, and its picnic and beach areas are well enjoyed by Madrid residents.

Resource Value of the River Today

The above statement illustrates something of the change in emphasis in thinking about and using the river. People are becoming more and more alienated from their natural heritage; they need a place to be refreshed. Furthermore, opportunities are provided for dwindling communities to grow again and to

prosper, as they gear to recreation-related businesses. The river, harnessed as it is in this new way, is a vital part of living in the Greenbelt Area.



Fishing, a favorite activity along the Des Moines River at Fraser. (Heusinkveld)

The Des Moines River Greenbelt project is unique in its preservation and restoration of our natural heritage, the treasure of our lands and waters. It provides a vision for a future in keeping with the Indian meaning of the word "Iowa," the beautiful land. The Greenbelt project highlights the interdependence of all who live near the Des Moines River, and the need to work together for a high quality of life for all its people.

Thus ends the story of the Greenbelt. The cast of characters has included the mastodon and bison hunters, the warring Sioux, the fur traders, the French general who made war on the Sac and Fox at Raccoon Forks, Chief Keokuk, Chief Kish-Ke-Kosh, the U.S. Dragoons, Wakonsa, Major William Williams, John Duncombe, the nefarious Henry Lott, Dr. W.H.H. Barker, William Leuty, Dominie H.P. Scholte, Anna Dalander, Carl Seashore, Isaac and James Hook, Thomas Mitchell, Wilson Brewer, W.C. Willson, John Parmelee, the farmers who broke the prairies and drained the sloughs, the immigrant coal miners, the railroad engineers, Kate Shelley, Frederick Hubbell, Gerard Scholte Nollen, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a host of others.

Today will soon be tomorrow's past, its "good old days." A new generation will take over the land. Likely, dynamic, startling changes, now completely unforeseen, will occur, affecting both man and his river. These new prospects and challenges will constitute another chapter in this story.

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